

1. Introduction Contemporary Popular Music

This overview provides a survey of musical activity in China. As such its scope is huge.

- Including popular music, mass music, art music and everything in between.
- Spanning a history that goes back to the beginning of modernity in China in the mid 19th century.
- Covering mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, and occasionally Singapore, Malaysia and other areas. This is not to say that all these places are currently ruled by the same political entity, but that they are to a larger or smaller extent part of a shared cultural sphere, tentatively named Greater China. For practical reasons I will define this cultural sphere by the use of Chinese languages and dialects, such as Mandarin, Cantonese, Taiwanese and Hakka. In other words, Chinese popular music here means popular music in Chinese languages (*huayu liuxing yinyue*).

That said, I am biased towards:

- Contemporary developments (since 2000).
- Popular music, including rock and urban folk.
- Beijing, where I have done most of my research.

I am open to suggestions, including additional information on the periods, genres, locations and languages that wholly or partly beyond my knowledge.

2. Locations

The following brief transnational or transregional (if you see Greater China as a single nation) history shows that the center of production has shifted from Shanghai in the 1920s and 1930s to Hong Kong in the 1950s to 1990s and Taipei in the 1970s to 2000s. I include Beijing because of its band scene.

2.1 Old Shanghai

The first Western songs were spread in Chinese society by missionaries during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912).

- The anthem of the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864) was an adaptation of the Christian hymn “Old 100th”.

After China suffered a series of military defeats from the mid-19th century onwards, cultural elites proposed and experimented with reforms, including in the field of education. Especially in the first years of the 20th century many new schools emerged, and these would often include choral singing in their curriculum. This practice was modeled on missionary schools, but also influenced by Japanese examples.

- “Farewell” (*songbie*) is one of the classics of these so called ‘classroom songs’ (*xuetang yuege*). Li Shutong wrote the Chinese lyrics in 1915, after hearing the Japanese adaptation of the American song “Dreaming of Home and Mother” when he studied in Tokyo.

Li Shutong also helped introducing cypher notation (*jianpu*) to China. This simplified notation system is still widely used in China today. Literacy in cypher notation enabled the dissemination of songs and children’s operas through magazines such as *Little Friend*. Li Jinhui, who started editing this magazine in 1922, is often credited as the father of Chinese popular music. A one-time teacher of Westernized

classroom songs, he fused Chinese musical elements in his own compositions. Moreover, Li started to perform his music and operas with the Bright Moon ensemble after he moved to Shanghai in 1920. This ensemble launched the careers of Zhou Xuan and Li's daughter Li Minghui.

Modern developments that contributed to the development of early Chinese popular music include:

- National language. Even though it wasn't fully standardized, Li Jinhui favored the Northern Chinese pronunciation in his music over South Chinese dialects such as Shanghainese or his native Hunanese.
- Colonialism. The French Concession and the Anglo-American-run Shanghai International were major hubs for international trade with China. In these areas an entertainment industry sprang up that provided employment for White-Russians and Jews who fled Europe as well as American jazz bands. Li Jinhui hired some of these musicians to play in his ensemble.
- Nights clubs. Whereas the earliest music mobilized masses, the 1930s saw more individual styles and slow danceable songs: waltzes, foxtrots and rumbas.
- Radio and gramophone. Multinational record companies such as Pathé, RCA Victor and Columbia established early subsidiaries in Shanghai. Shanghai had over sixty radio stations by the mid-1930s, further enabling the emergence of individual voices and hence the first pop stars.
- Cinema. The music and film industries labored side by side to promote songs, stars and stories. Music had in China always been combined with narrative and visual elements. Peking opera is a relatively late example of this. Even the Chinese word for 'music' (*yinyue*) was a Japanese translation of a European concept. Whereas cypher notation, radio and gramophone isolated sound from its visual context, the emerging film industry reestablished this connection.
 - The first Chinese talkie was *Singing Girl Red Peony* (1931), starring Hu Die.
 - "When Does the Gentleman Return" became a hit after Zhou Xuan sang it in *Three Stars, Half Moon* (1937), but it was still included in another film in 1939.
 - In 1937 Zhou Xuan also starred in Yuan Muzhi's *Street Angel*, singing the now classic songs "The Four Seasons Song" and "The Wandering Songstress".

In this period music was framed as part of the project of saving the nation through aesthetic education. Li Jinhui and other pop music composers subscribed this project and argued that their cultivation of beauty contributed to it. However, their efforts were criticized by the newly established conservatories in Beijing and Shanghai as well as the emerging leftist elite.

- Li Jinhui's former student Nie Er was one of these critics. In 1935 Nie Er composed the national anthem of the PRC.

Similarly, although Zhou Xuan and other singers acted in leftist films such as *Street Angel*, especially during and after the Second World War the songs they performed were increasingly criticized for being escapist, bourgeoisie and decadent. During the 1940s and 1950s, the majority of the music and film companies and singers relocated to Hong Kong, some to Taiwan and some stayed behind. When the Communists came to power in 1949 they made Beijing the center of mass media and cultural production, and started censoring this 'yellow music' in the 1950s.

For the émigrés, the sounds of 1930s Shanghai quickly became nostalgic. The Taiwanese dubbed them *shidaiqu*, 'songs of the times' and kept performing these songs as an ossified genre. As time passed, in Taipei, Hong Kong and (post 1978) Shanghai itself, the tragic personal life of Zhou Xuan, Ruan Lingyu and other female stars of this period became the stuff of lore and melancholy, representing the turbulent

days when Shanghai was the ‘Pearl of the Orient’.

2.2 Hong Kong

After the end of the Second World War, a civil war broke out in mainland China between Communists and Nationalists. Many people fled to Hong Kong. Its population rose from 600,000 to 2.2 million between 1945 and 1950. These refugees also included a large portion of film and music industry personnel. After Shanghai, Hong Kong became the new center of production for Chinese popular music.

The industry continued producing alluring images and sounds of ‘the new woman’. Because Hong Kong is at this time a British colony, Western symbols of modernity are even more pronounced. Songs become faster than the Shanghai-style ballads.

- Like many musicals of this time, *Mambo Girls* (1957) depicts the life of fashion-minded upper-class youths. After suspecting that her birth mother was a peasant, Grace Chang dances her worries away, singing “I Love Chachacha”.
- In the title song of *Our Dream Car* (1959) Chang sings of the joy of driving your own car.
- After the Beatles performed in Hong Kong in 1964, young Hong Kong men started forming their own bands, singing in English.

With the PRC closed off from popular music and the colony’s economic prosperity, the music and film industries increasingly catered to a local Hong Kong audience. In the 1970s this leads to a shift from Mandarin to Cantonese as the major Chinese dialect in the industry’s output. This shift is aided by the emergence of television.

- Samuel Hui had been singing English songs with his band Lotus in the late 1960s. He switched to Cantonese for the theme song of his brother’s 1974 blockbuster film *Games Gamblers Play*, a comedy in Cantonese. Hui’s successful first Cantonese album addresses social issues.
- In the early 1970s female stars such as Liza Wang and Paula Tsui recorded Cantonese theme songs of televised drama series, next to their more high-brow Mandarin repertoire.
- In 1976 Roman Tam shot to fame after singing the theme song of a Hong Kong broadcast of a Japanese TV series. He had been signed by TVB, one of Hong Kong’s principal TV broadcasters, and subsequently sang the theme songs of many of the company’s productions.

Cantopop dominated Chinese popular music in the 1980s. Stars such as Anita Mui and Leslie Cheung came to represent a Hong Kong identity that is local and intimate and at the same time international and glamorous. Since 1983, Mui, Cheung, Paula Tsui and others gave series of live concerts in the new 12,500 seater Hong Kong Coliseum. In between songs the stars would chat with the audience about their private lives and the outrageous prices of their outfits. Celebrity culture connected cinema, TV, live shows and print media. The boulevard press prospered.

By the late 1980s, the Four Heavenly Kings of Cantopop emerged: Andy Lau, Jacky Cheung, Aaron Kwok and Leon Lai. Many of their hits were adaptations of Japanese pop songs. The karaoke industry helped fuel their immense popularity, also in the PRC. The PRC had started its economic reforms in 1978, since 1984 Hong Kong pop singers performed on national television and in the mid 1990s the PRC again became the biggest market for Chinese popular music. Meanwhile, Hong Kong returned to the PRC in 1997. Next to the Four Heavenly Kings, Faye Wong also performed at the ceremonies.

- Faye Wong profited from the increasing importance of Mandarin in the Hong Kong industry. Originally from Beijing, her record company Cinepoly gave her a make-over, erasing all the

'backward' mainland Chinese remnants. It worked. In 1992 Wong had her first hit with the Cantonese song "Easily Hurt Woman", a cover of "Rouge" by the Japanese singer Miyuki Nakajima. In 1994 Faye Wong scored her first Mandarin hit with the song "I'm Willing" in Taiwan. These songs promote a traditional Chinese passive femininity. However in 1994 Wong started experimenting with more alternative sounds and images, influenced by the Beijing rock scene. She cut her hair and seemed more in control. In contrast to the Mui, Cheung and other entertainers, Wong rarely talks to the press and is perceived as frigid and mysterious. Paradoxically, this generates a lot of interest, and also the fact that she increasingly recorded in Mandarin has enabled her to dominate the latter half of the 1990s.

The worldwide slump in record sales made Hong Kong more reliant on a few superstars. As a result companies such as Amusic and Emperor Entertainment Group were reluctant to invest in young talents, including songwriters and producers. To counter this trend Commercial Radio Hong Kong launched an 'original songs campaign' in 1995, refusing to play cover songs on its market-leading channel. This exposed the lack of good songwriters, but in doing so seems only to have accelerated the decline of Cantopop. Although Eason Chan, Edison Chen, Joey Yung and the girl band Twins have been successful in the new millennium, the momentum moved to Taipei.

2.3 Taipei

Taiwan was part of the Japan between 1895 and 1945. Since 1917 a small local record industry developed in Taiwan. Most songs were structurally similar to Japanese enka and sung in Taiwanese (also referred to as Hoklo or Hokkien). With new lyrics, some of these songs were later used by the Japanese to recruit Taiwanese soldiers for the Second World War.

In 1949 the Nationalist army (KMT) fled from mainland China to Taiwan. These 'extra-provincials' now ruled the island in Mandarin and from Taipei. During the 1950s and 1960s there were three main kinds of music:

- Despite the KMT repression of Taiwanese-ness and the language in particular, Wen Hsia, Ang It-hong and other Taiwanese-language singers managed to become hugely popular. Many of their songs express a sense of loss and insecurity in Taiwan's rapidly modernizing society.
- Next to *shidaiqu*, Mandarin-language Shanghai pop music of the 1920s and 1930s that remembered the extra-provincial people of their hometowns in mainland China, a local Mandarin language pop slowly emerged in Taiwan, first through radio stations.
 - Zhou Lanping composed "The Green Island Serenade" in 1954, which in the recording of Zi Wei became Taiwan's first international Mandarin pop hit.
 - Zhou also composed the music for the hugely popular 1963 Hong Kong film version of the traditional Huangmei opera story *The Butterfly Lovers*.
 - In 1964 a local radio station organized a singing contest with these songs. The First prize is won by Teresa Teng, then eleven years old.

The arrival of television brought a visual element, first with the entertainment show *Gathering of Stars*, later with soap series such as *Jing Jing*. The film and the song *I Won't Go Home Tonight* (1968) was another huge success. Successful counterfeiters changed their business model and started signing local singers.

- During the Cold War Taiwan hosted American military bases, functioning as an important hub for the war in Vietnam. Like in South-Korea and Okinawa (Japan), in Taiwan the presence of American soldiers introduced American pop through the airwaves and in bars.

Although with singers such as Yao Sulong Taiwan continued to develop its own mandarin music in the early 1970s, in 1975 a folk or campus song movement emerged that stressed that ‘singing our own songs’. Although the movement perhaps exaggerated the absence of indigenous music, it did address real socio-cultural concerns.

- After Nixon’s visit to Beijing in 1972, the US recognized the PRC as representing China. Soon most Western nations and the United Nations followed. This was a serious challenge to the KMT’s claim to be the sole represent of China. It made Taiwan reconsider its own identity and position. America became suspect and so did American popular music.
- The Mandarin popular music that developed in Taiwan was (perceived to be) based on Shanghai practices, combined with influences from Hong Kong, Japan and America. Concretely it (1) continued and institutionalized the labor division between composer and singer; and (2) it didn’t take into account local folk music traditions.
- Ironically, the concept of the singer-songwriter who composes and performs his or her own music was based on American examples, such as Bob Dylan and Joan Baez. Intellectuals translated the idea, along with its concept of authenticity, to Taiwan. On the more spectacular side, there was the singer Li Shuangze, who famously smashed a cola bottle, shouting ‘where is our own music’. More modestly, there was the local folk musician Yang Xian, whose rehabilitation influenced Kimbo (Hu Defu) and others. Through radio contests, Campus Song spread the idea that everyone with an acoustic guitar could make music, which had a huge appeal on a young generation that was becoming more wealthy but also more insecure about the outside world.

By the late 1970s Campus Song started to be co-opted by the mainstream. Luo Dayou’s album *Gibberish* (1982) claimed the death of Campus Song, replacing its nostalgic elusiveness with a more confrontational rock sound. Nevertheless the movement changed the industry.

- It produced huge hits, such as “Descendent of the Dragon”, sung by Li Jianfu, written by Hou Dejian.
- It launched the careers of singers, songwriters and producers that would dominate the 1980s, including Qi Yu, Jonathan Lee, Hou Dejian and Luo Dayou.
- It established new institutions that quickly became very influential, such as the Golden Melody Awards and Rock Records.
- It influenced mainstream pop singers in Hong Kong and Taiwan. They started recording songs that were patriotic or that reflected on Chinese traditional culture. For instance Teresa Teng’s 1983 album *Light Exquisite Feeling* set Chinese traditional poetry to music and was produced by a Campus singer.

The 1970s and 1980s were also the hight of Teresa Teng’s fame. Teng had a successful career in Japan, recorded albums in Hong Kong and toured South-East Asia. She was briefly banned in the PRC in 1983, but also in mainland China, which had just opened-up, her popularity proved unstoppable. Teng is arguably the most successful Chinese pop star ever and her rendition of the song “The Moon Represents My Heart” still defines Chineseness for many Chinese descendants across the globe.

Martial law was lifted in 1987 and gradually local Taiwanese identity and language became accepted and later obligatory in official and mainstream media. At the same time mainland China became a major market.

- A-mei (Chang Hui-mei) combined some of these trends since the late 1990s. Her aboriginal background authenticates her Taiwaneseess and makes her sexy outfits and wild dancing acceptable in the eyes of Taiwanese audiences. However, references to her ethnic background

do not dominate her music, which combines Eurodance, rock and typical Mandopop ballads. A-mei's popularity in China ran into problems when she sang the national anthem of the Republic of China (i.e. Taiwan) in 2000 at the inauguration of president Cheng Shui-bian, who is a fervent supporter of Taiwanese independence.

- Jolin Tsai became the top female artist because of her dancing skills. In albums such as *Agent J* she presents an image of female power and control. Because of her success in keeping her body figure she promotes her own health line and work-out videos.
- Jay Chou dominated the first decade of the 21st century. Like almost all Chinese stars, Chou does not focus on any genre. However he has introduced R&B sounds and is known for rapping in an inarticulate but highly creative way. Additionally, his yearly albums typically contain one or two songs in a style dubbed Chinese Wind, which includes Chinese instruments (often in the intro or the bridge) and lyrical allusions to Chinese tradition (such as calligraphy, medicine or lacquer ware). Some of these songs eulogize the rise of China, which has helped Chou gain official support in mainland China. But most songs present the past as a distant, ephemeral lover.
- Wang Leehom, an American Born Chinese, developed a similar style, which he dubbed Chinked Out. Other stars, such as David Tao, followed suit.
- The veteran rocker Wu Bai emerged in 1995. For a long time he was rather isolated in his focus on the local Taiwanese market, but in recent years more mainstreams pop stars have recorded songs in Taiwanese, including A Mei, Zhang Zhenyue and a host of rappers. Whereas much Mandarin popular music longs for the purity of the village, this so called Taike rock often longs for the vibrancy of the city.

Although S.H.E. is a hugely popular girl band, it's members have gone separate ways. The overall trend is towards artists that can write their own repertoire, including bands (Mayday, Soda Green), singer-songwriters (see Indie Pop below) and rappers (see Hip Hop and Rap below).

2.4 Beijing

Beijing became the political and cultural center of the PRC in 1949. In the 1950s it banned Shanghai pop music, which it deemed colonial and decadent, and rather based its mass music on Russian 'classical' music and Romantic composers. After 1958 a singing style based on Chinese folk traditions emerged. This new official music was deemed as scientific as Western bell canto but more suitable to represent China at official events.

Leftist intellectuals had collected folk songs since the 1920s and when the Communists had their base in Yan'an (1936-1948) they adopted folklore to their propaganda efforts.

- "Nanniwan" and "The East is Red" are based on North-West Chinese folk tunes.

These songs continued to be popular during the 1950s and 1960s and more 'songs from the battlefield' appeared, often composed collectively. Additionally, the eight Model Opera's (*yangbanxi*) dominated the mass media in the 1960s and 1970s. The film versions of *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy* and *The Red Detachment of Women* captivated generations. Their mix of traditional Chinese melodies and Romantic Western orchestration and are one of the few cultural achievements of the violent period of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1978) (See Mass and Propaganda Music below).

In the early 1980s, popular music returned to the PRC. 1986 counts as the rebirth, because of the success of the songs "Let the World be Full of Love" and Cui Jian's "Nothing to My Name". Cui Jian

and most rock musicians of the first hour grew up in the privileged military compounds of Beijing. Since the 1970s, these small communities did have access to foreign popular culture, which was distributed as negative examples and evidence of the West's imminent demise.

Cui Jian was at first part of a short-lived genre called Northwest wind, which combined jumpy melodies and an uncouth singing with pop and rock instrumentation and song structures.

- Cui recorded a folk rock version of Nanniwan, a revolutionary classic based on a Yan'an folk tune. This re-appropriation allegedly upset officials and led to Cui's censorship in the 1990s.

Especially Taiwanese musicians and companies have tried to professionalize the pop music industry in mainland China:

- The Taiwanese singer Hou Dejian defected to the PRC in the 1983, bringing professional knowledge and song-writing skills. After his active support of the 1989 protests he was expelled.
- Rock Records subsidiary Magic Stone invested heavily in the early 1990s.

Despite these efforts, mainland Chinese has produced very few pop stars. Nevertheless there are well known singers in the following genres:

- Official pop singers, including Song Zuying, Teng Ge'er and Han Hong. See Mass and Propaganda Music below.
- Rock stars, including Cui Jian, Dou Wei and Xu Wei. See Rock Music below.
- Urban folk singers, including Ai Jing and Zhou Yunpeng. See Urban Folk below.

3. Institutions and Industry

The Chinese music industry is dominated by Taiwan and Hong Kong. In the new millennium also these record companies have seen their income of CDs decline drastically. Increasingly, music companies have had to find different commodities to sell. This has led to two opposing trends.

- Music companies control and are involved in every aspect of a star. Already in the 1990s Hong Kong companies signed so called 360 degree deals. Boy and girl bands were successful in the early 2000s, but the investments were also substantial. Currently, South-Korean entertainment companies dominate this model in East and South-East Asia. Although talent shows and soap opera's have offered similar grooming opportunities within the Chinese-language pop industry, this model was not widely adopted in Taiwan, Hong Kong or the PRC.
- Music companies become publishing houses that outsource much of the labor that goes into creating a pop star back to the artists themselves. These companies favor artists with their own repertoire, star persona and even fan base. This also means that the gap between the band scene and mainstream pop stars decreases. Especially among Taiwan-based artists there are many examples of bands (Mayday, Soda Green), singer-songwriters (Cheer Chen, Deserts Zhang, Tanya Chua, Zhang Zhenyue) and rappers (McHotdog) that have worked themselves up to the top of 'the pyramid' (Simon Frith). Even the mainstream pop star Jay Chou composes his own music.
- Additionally, both stars and indie bands create their own companies and labels.

These are the income levels in the top of the market:

- In 2011 Jay Chou earned around 660 million NTD.
- Jolin Tsai around 620 million NTD in the same year.
- The mainland Chinese singer Chris Lee reported an earning of 51 million RMB in 2011.

For Taiwanese superstars the income is roughly spread like this:

- Endorsements (65%). This includes new forms of collaboration such as product placement in on line content.
- Concerts tickets. (5%). In contrast to the West, in Chinese-language pop the record company is often involved. Because of the small margins concerts are seen as a promotional activity.
- Private concerts (25%). This includes concerts for which no tickets are sold, such as year-end concerts for employees in Taiwan and government-sponsored appearances in the PRC. Whereas a major star may cost 3 to 4 million NTD for a 4+1 songs, a second tier Taiwanese artist may cost only 500 thousand NTD.
- Collectibles (5%). This includes CD sales, but also biographies and other commodities that their fans buy.

3.1 Record Companies

International record companies such as Pathé (later EMI) and Columbia (later Sony) entered the Chinese market as early as the 1920s.

In 2005 four record companies accounted for 71.7% of retail music sales worldwide. In 2011 one of these companies, EMI, was bought and split between Sony and Warner. The three remaining companies have a strong presence in the Chinese market:

- Universal Music Group.
 - Hong Kong. Universal entered the Hong Kong market in 1994 when it purchased Polygram. Polygram was instrumental the emergence of Cantopop in the 1970s, and after Universal and Polygram merged in 1998, Universal became market leader in Hong Kong.
 - Taiwan. Polygram bought a 60% share in the local Linfair Records in 1992. Linfair then represented Polygram's label Decca in the Taiwanese market. In 1998 Universal and Polygram merged, and Universal started its own, quite successful Taiwanese subsidiary.
 - Mainland China. In 2004 Universal announced a joint venture with the Shanghai Media Group, called SUM Entertainment. Currently it represents a host of major PRC singers, including Jane Zhang.
- Sony Music Entertainment
 - Hong Kong. Sony Music entered the Hong Kong market in 1978 and BMG in 1986. The two merged in 2008-2009. In 2011 Sony purchased the music department of EMI, which had been influential in Hong Kong in the 1980s and 1990s. Currently Sony represents Faye Wong, among others.
 - Taiwan. Sony and BMG opened subsidiaries in Taiwan in 1991 and 1992. The two merged in 2008-2009. In 2011 Sony purchased the music department of EMI, but did not sign a new contract with pop diva A Mei. Currently Sony Music (Taiwan) also distributes the albums of Alfa Music and JVR Music, the latter is Jay Chou's music company.
 - Mainland China. A relatively new and small office, Sony Music China has signed seven artists.
- Warner Music Group
 - Hong Kong. Warner entered the Hong Kong market in 1978. Currently, its largest star is Khalil Fong.
 - Taiwan. In 1982 Warner entered the Taiwanese market with buying a stake in UFO records.

UFO became a dominant player in the Taiwanese record industry. However, after problems in the early 1990s, in 1999 Warner itself entered the market. Currently Warner Taiwan represents the sales in Taiwan and South-East Asia of many artists that are signed to other labels. The company has also signed pop diva Jolin Tsai, among others.

- Mainland China. Between 2000 and 2004, Warner worked together with Rye. After 2004 Warner has a modest office in mainland China.

In short, these record companies entered Hong Kong in the late 1970s and Taiwan in the 1980s and 1990s. They entered mainland China much later and on a modest scale.

In Hong Kong and Taiwan, these major international companies were often very influential. Nevertheless there are also many successful local record companies.

Hong Kong

- Avex Group (Hong Kong) is not a local but also not part of the big four. Established in 1996. A local branch of Japanese second largest record company (after Sony).
- Emperor Entertainment Group (EEG). Established in 1999. Major entertainment company.
- Gold Typhoon Entertainment. Established in 2008. Major entertainment company.
- Star Entertainment. Established in 2007. Major entertainment company.
- East Asia Music. Established in 2004. Representing Andy Lau and Sammi Cheng, among others.
- Music Nation Group. Established in 2002. One of the many smaller entertainment companies based in Hong Kong and active throughout Chinese-speaking areas.
- People Mountain People Sea. Established in 1999 by the alternative pop singer Anthony Wong among others. This company navigates between the mainstream and indie music and has written and produced song and albums for major stars.

Taiwan

- Avex Group (Taiwan) is not a local but also not part of the big four. Established in 1998. A local branch of Japanese second largest record company (after Sony).
- Rock Records. Established in 1980, Rock Records has since then been a major player in Chinese language pop. In the 1980s the producer, singer and songwriter Jonathan Lee was involved in many of the hit songs. Rock Records gradually became the largest local Chinese music company. In the 1990s they established a subsidiary in Hong Kong and their label Magic Stone also signed a number of Beijing-based rock bands. Although Rock Records has now closed these operations, they were important at the time.
- Linfair. Established in 1961. Linfair was part of Polygram (later Universal) between 1992 and 2002, but continued as a local label after 2002.
- HIM International Music. Established in 1999 and representing S.H.E., among others.
- Forward Music. Established in 1995.
- Skyhigh Entertainment. Established in 1999.
- Asia Muse Entertainment Group. Established in 2006. Active in the PRC, Taiwan and Japan.
- Seed Music. Established in 1995. Seed Music publishes a number of albums of EEG artists.
- B'in Music. Established in 2006. Often publishing through Rock Records. Representing May Day and Fish Leong, among others.
- Wind Music. Established in 1988 and specializing in new age and world music.

PRC

- Taihe Rye. Established in 1996 in Beijing by Song Ke and the producer Gao Xiaosong, the company was a subsidiary of Warner between 2000 and 2004. After 2004 the Taihe media group became the main investors. Throughout these changes Taihe Rye remained the major mainland Chinese pop music company, partly through the efforts of producer Zhang Yadong (who rose to fame by producing a number of albums of Faye Wong). Chris Lee, the winner of a Chinese talent show in 2005 is currently their top-selling star.
- Peacock Records. Established in 1996 and located in Guangzhou, close to Hong Kong. They currently represent the hugely popular ethno-pop duo Phoenix Legend.
- Tianyu Media was established in Shanghai in 2004 and has a monopoly on the winners of the hugely successful talents shows that appear on Hunan Satellite Television.
- A number of major Chinese singers, such as Han Hong and Xu Wei, have signed with media conglomerates that are otherwise not involved in musical production.
- Since Beijing is the center for rock music in China, it is also the home of a number of medium and small indie music labels. In the 1990s, Modern Sky, Scream Records and the more mainstream Jingwen published most albums. In the early 2000s, 13th Month (mainly folk rock), Maybe Mars (allied to the venues D-22 and later XP) and Tree Music gave talented upcoming artists the crucial opportunity to record an album.

3.2 Festivals

So far the festival markets of Hong Kong, Taiwan and mainland China are not integrated. In all these places government policies and sponsorship play a major role.

Hong Kong has few large open-air music festivals.

- The government-sponsored yearly Hong Kong Arts Festival lasts several weeks and mainly makes use of indoor venues. Its programs includes pop, rock and folk music, next to the traditional arts.

Festivals emerged in Taiwan in the 1990s.

- Formoz Festival was held in Taipei yearly between 1995 and 2008. The festival was known for inviting foreign headliners.
- Spring Scream is Taiwan's oldest festival. Since 1995 it is held yearly in the most southern tip of the island. In 2007 it invited around 230 artists.
- Ho-Hai-Yan is sponsored by the provincial government of Taipei. The free festival is held since 2000 on a beach a few hours outside of the city.

Music festivals have become an important source of income for artists in mainland China. However, the development of this market has been slow and winding.

The 1990s, Prehistory

In the PRC, the first festivals were organized in the 1990s, often by foreigners.

- The Beijing International Jazz Festival. Co-founded by Udo Hoffman, Robert van Kan (then employee of the Dutch Embassy) and saxophonist Liu Yuan back in 1993, the festival was held in Beijing yearly from until 2000. After a seven-year hiatus, a new jazz Festival was set up in late September 2007 a cooperative effort between the [Beijing Midi School of Music](#) and [Beijing Midi Productions](#).
- Heineken Beat. Held in Ditan Park in 1999 and 2000, mainly featuring local rock bands.

2000~2007, Building relations

The Beijing Midi School of Music started organizing a reunion for its graduates in 2000. After two years the festival moved to the campus yard. By then the festival lasted three days and attracted a few thousands visitors. In 2004 the festival moved to the Sculpture Park and the next year to Haidian Park, where it was held for three consecutive years. In the course of a few years the Midi Festival had developed from a semi-legal reunion to a four-day open-air festival that boasted 80 thousand visitors. That the parks are state-owned further illustrates the ameliorating relation of this private school with various government organizations. Although negotiations over permits caused the festival to be postponed and even canceled several times, in 2007 Midi also received a subsidy of fifty thousand RMB from the Haidian district government to be used in 2008

Already in 2004, Huang Liaoyuan had convinced local governments and entrepreneurs to support a rock festival in Gansu province, and also the Lijiang Snow Mountain festival in Yunnan province, held in 2002 and again in 2007, was only viable because of state sponsorship. This would become a new trend.

2007~present

After 2007 festivals in PRC proliferated. From around ten large-scale open-air festivals in 2007, there were around forty festivals in the PRC in 2010. In 2011 there were fifty one festivals around Labour Day, seventeen of which were large scale; thirty three in the last week of August (coinciding with large festivals in Japan), eight of which large scale; and seventy six around National Day (October first), forty of which large scale (Conversation, Zhang Ran, March 2012).

These large scale festivals can be divided in three broad categories.

1. Major festivals. Festivals in major metropolises such as Beijing and Shanghai can often muster enough audience to predominantly rely on ticket sales – often around ten thousand each day, festivals habitually advertise inflated visitor numbers. Nevertheless, sponsor deals have become increasingly important.
 - When Midi gradually professionalized and started selling tickets, bands became disenfranchised with the financial compensation they received and the quality of the festival in general.
 - When the record company Modern Sky started organizing its festival in 2007, it proved much more apt at securing extra income from product endorsement, and was able to channel some of that profit to the bands. Similarly, Modern Sky's other festival, Strawberry, has successfully introduced audiences to a hedonistic and somewhat consumerist music+experience.

Even these two major festival brands have so far (2012) no long term contract with a specific location and have been forced to move around the city to increasingly remote parks.

A number of smaller festivals have pioneered with foreign artists. In 2005 Ian Brown and Common played at the Beijing Pop Festival, in 2006 Placebo and Supergrass and in 2007 Nine Inch Nails, Marky Ramone, New York Dolls, Public Enemy (organized by Rock for China Entertainment). In 2011 the Black Rabbit Festival brought 30 Second to Mars and Ludacris to Beijing and Shanghai (organized by Split Works). To diversify, Strawberry and other festivals throughout the country have increasingly invited foreign bands and/or pop stars from Taiwan and Hong Kong.

2. Commissioned Festivals. Since 2007, local governments have increasingly welcomed festivals.

Some of these municipalities are located on the outskirts of large cities, all of them rely on tourism for local economic development. Local governments see festivals as a way of attracting young tourists and generate media exposure. The nation-wide policy concerning the cultural and creative industries (since 2000) further adds ideological and financial support. In short, these festivals are primarily sponsored by local governments and rarely rely on ticket sales. Often a substantial part of the tickets is given away to local audiences, many of whom never attended rock shows before.

- Lijiang Snow Mountain, in Yunnan province.
- Zebra Festival, in Chengdu, Sichuan province (co-organized by a private company and the local state-owned media conglomerate).
- West Lake Festival, in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province.
- Inmusic Zhang Bei Grasslands Festival, several hours north-west of Beijing.
- China Music Valley, in Yuegu, several hours north-east of Beijing (organized by Gehua-LiveNation, a joint venture of leading Chinese and American ticket selling companies).

Because local governments lack experience in organizing music festivals, they often commission a concert organizer. Established festival organizers such as Midi and Modern Sky have also tapped into this market and organized installments of their festival in various locations, effectively changing their festival into a brand name with few connections to any physical location or local community. Famously, Midi organized a festival in Zhenjiang in 2010, and was angry when they found out that Modern Sky had snatched the contract from under their nose in 2011. Modern Sky now yearly organizes Strawberry Festivals in Beijing, Shanghai and Xi'an.

3. One-off Festivals. The market for festivals in China is still very insecure. Many festivals cease after only one edition, often advertising huge losses. I cite four main reasons:
 - It's a relatively new market, a stable business model has yet to emerge. It's not yet sufficiently clear who the major players are.
 - Local governments prefer big showy festivals, even if it would make more sense to promote creativity and cultivate audiences through supporting more modest initiatives such as local live houses.
 - Local governments sometimes prefer working with relatively inexperienced organizations rather than with the more expensive established festival brands.
 - Rent-seeking, last-minute changes and other complications with securing funds and permits.

Take for instance the Big Love festival. Held a few hours outside of Chengdu in June 2012, the first edition of the festival staged 100 artists in 4 days. Headliners included major pop stars from Taiwan and Hong Kong (Luo Dayou, Soda Green) as well as Suede and Extreme. Many visitors either bought the free tickets that locals resold or struck a deal with security personnel that offered to take visitors onto the festival terrain. The box office was a disaster. The inexperienced festival organization ran into problems the third day (unable to pay electricity), and finally advertised a deficit of around 50 million RMB. This is a huge number, enough to run a thousand live houses for a year. Only two years earlier Midi and similar festivals worked with budgets of 6 million RMB. Even with major international pop stars, running such a huge deficit only seems possible if a substantial part of the money was used to pay kickbacks to officials of various local departments.

Despite these uneven developments, there are many positive aspects to music festivals.

- Because of music festivals, successful Chinese rock bands can now for the first time live from their music.

- It offers a rare middle ground between governments, markets and artists. This can be interpreted as co-optation, but also more positively as an opportunity for previously stigmatized kinds of music (such as rock) to gain larger exposure.
- It provides audiences with a larger variety of musical culture, especially those living outside the large coastal cities of Beijing and Shanghai. Most festivals are eclectic, staging pop singers, rock bands, Djs and sometimes local ‘ethnic’ music. There are also festivals that focus on a particular genre:
 - jazz (JZ in Shanghai, Nine Gates in Beijing)
 - electronic dance music (Rave parties, Intro in Beijing)
 - folk music (Ditan Folk Festival in Beijing)

3.3 Venues

Stadiums

In mainland China large performance venues such as stadiums and conference centers are state-owned. Often a substantial part of the tickets is handed out to various governmental departments to secure their support. This and difficulties with permits is why stadium concerts in China are only profitable for the largest stars and why even the largest stars rarely perform in mainland China. Even with around 20 million inhabitants, Beijing hosts around one concert of a major pop star each month, often in the Worker’s Stadium or Wukesong Stadium.

When Jay Chou performed in Shanghai in 2010, it was at the Shanghai stadium. After the Shanghai Expo of 2010, the Mercedes-Benz Arena (maximum capacity of 18 thousand) has also hosted a number of concerts.

The Hong Kong Coliseum offers 12,500 seats. Since it was built in 1983, Hong Kong pop stars staged elaborate shows, often days or even weeks on end.

In Taiwan, the Taipei Arena is the main location for large-scale concerts. However, Radiohead performed in July 2012 in the Taipei WTC Nangang Exhibition Hall.

Live Houses and Pubs

Beijing East (Sanlitun)

- In the 1980s most of the shows where in hotels, restaurants or clubs catering to foreigners.
- A bar street emerged in the east side of town, near the embassy area and the central business district. Today, sanlitun and the surrounding area offer many cheap drinks but few live performance venues.
- The Jazz bar CD cafe is an exception.
- Further east there are two rock venues. To the northeast the rock bar Dos Kolegas frequently hosts reggae nights. Mako Live, several kilometers to the southeast of Sanlitun, even south east of the CBD, is a large former factory that is used as a live house.
- Sanlitun houses many dance clubs. Cloud 9 (now closed), Club 88 (now closed), White Rabbit (later Haze) and Lantern feature local and international Djs of renown.

Beijing Northwest (Wudaokou)

- In the mid and late 1990s a number of small bars in the northwest of the city offered shows to Chinese and international exchange students that were living in this university area. Of these places Scream Bar and Happy Paradise were crucial for emerging punk and rap metal scenes.
- In the early 2000s D-22 (new wave, punk, now closed) and Club13 (metal) have kept this tradition alive.

Beijing Central (Drum Tower)

- The ‘traditional’ low rise around lake Houhai and the adjacent Drum Tower area (including Nanluoguxiang and Wudaoying hutongs) emerged as a central area for tourism, shopping and night life after 2005.
- The area has a host of small bars. Jiangjinjiu, Jianghu and Zajia offer original (folk) music.
- 121, Temple (rock), Hot Cat, XP (experimental music, by the owners of D-22), East Shore (jazz), School (DJs) and Si...If (DJs) are medium sized spaces that offer a wide variety of music, for free or a modest cover charge.
- Live houses include StarLive (now Tango, to the north, near Lama Temple), Mao Livehouse (by Japanese investors) and Yugong Yishan (to the south, near Zhangzizhonglu). These venues are larger and usually better equipped. With Mako Live (see Sanlitun), these places are the top live music venues of Beijing. They can sell over one thousand tickets for shows of foreign bands, better-known Chinese bands and (often Taiwanese) pop singers.

Shanghai

- Shanghai is more commercial than Beijing. Rents are higher, making it more difficult for prospective bar owners to find a suitable place. For instance, after the long-standing Ark Livehouse closed down in 2008, the renovated area Xin Tiandi consists only of shops and expensive restaurants and bars.
- Much as in the 1920s and 1930s, Shanghai from the 1990s onwards offers a wide range of jazz bars, often staging foreign artists. Cotton Club, JZ (since 2004) and the House of Blues and Jazz are all located in the old concessions near the Bund.
- Since 2006, Yuyintang is Shanghai’s principle venue for rock shows. Located just outside the center it has space for 500 people. In 2009, the much larger Mao Livehouse Shanghai became its main competitor. Smaller live music venues include Windows Underground, Dada, 288 Melting Pot and 021 Bar.
- Shelter is an alternative club in a poorly ventilated basement. There are also many classy and commercial nightclubs in Shanghai, including D.D.’s (now closed), Y.Y., Muse (Park97 and several other locations), Babyface and M1NT.

PRC second-tier cities

- Since the mid 2000s, Beijing-based rock bands embarked on national tours. Although equipment, remuneration and other factors can be substandard, it is now possible for bands to tour outside the main urban centers of China.
- Whereas northeastern China is still quite difficult to tour, the northwest (Xi’an, Lanzhou), the southwest (Nanjing, Vox Bar in Wuhan, Little Bar in Chengdu, Kunming, Dali), the southeast (Base Bar in Shenzhen, Guangzhou, Zhuhai) and central-east China (Hangzhou, Qingdao, Dalian, Club 13 in Tianjin) are part of this informal network.
- Some of these cities have one or more stable, dedicated venues that have build an audience and perhaps even foster a local band scene. Shows in other cities may take place in venues that normally stage cover music, standard jazz or club music.

Hong Kong

- Even more so than Shanghai, in Hong Kong it is very hard for prospective entrepreneurs to find an affordable and suitably located building to open a live music venue in. The Hong Kong's music scene is famously deprived of opportunities to perform live, which has not stopped bands from making interesting music.
- Fringe Club, since 1983, is located in a Victorian building close to Lam Kwai Fong, Hong Kong's most famous bar street. Fringe Club is now a multi-purpose art and cultural center sponsored by the Hong Kong city council. It hosts live music shows each Friday and Saturday.
- Hidden Agenda opened in 2009 but has had to relocate several times by 2012.

Taipei

- Small venues arose around universities in Taipei in the 1990s. Of these, Witch House, Riverside and Underworld gained national fame through media coverage of their struggles with safety laws and gentrification. In 2012 Underworld is again under such pressure and it is unclear if the bar will continue.
- Pubs mainly rely on selling beverages. By contrast, live houses rely on tickets, and hence at these venues the music is more central. This concept was introduced to Taiwan from Japan by Freddy of the metal band ChthoniC. In 2003 he opened a venue with a capacity of 600 called The Wall Livehouse. The Wall successfully hosted shows of a range of foreign artists, often while they were on their Japanese tour. Currently the Wall has opened subsidiaries in other Taiwanese cities, including Kaohsiung and Yilan.
- Legacy is a larger live house that has opened in Taipei in 2009. With a capacity of over one thousand it is too large for most indie bands. Whereas pop singers perform on the weekends, the venue gives the floor to new talent each Thursday.
- There are several live houses in other cities in Taiwan, including Kaohsiung, Taichung, Hualien and Tainan. Sometimes these are sponsored by local governments, which seek new purposes for old beer factories and other industrial buildings located in city centers.

3.4 Karaoke and KTV Parlors

Karaoke was invented in Japan in the late 1960s and is popular across East and Southeast Asia and among overseas Asian audiences.

- Given Japan's influence on Taiwan's culture, it is not surprising that karaoke moved to Taiwan quite early. At first it was associated with Japanese culture, enka and nostalgia especially. In the 1980s and 1990s it became a mainstream form of entertainment.
- After karaoke moved to Hong Kong in 1988 it has quickly taken over nightclubs as the most popular form of nightlife. Record companies test their songs in large karaoke parlors, and promotion among karaoke audiences is part of the launch of any mainstream pop album.
- Karaoke and KTV became popular Mainland China in the course of the 1990s.

Public karaoke and private KTV

- The Taiwanese claim to have invented karaoke television or KTV. Whereas karaoke takes place around the karaoke jukebox in a bar and performers can thus be observed by all the clients, KTV not only introduces a visual element, it also takes place in separate private rooms.
- In parks all over China small entrepreneurs still bring out carts with sound equipment on summer evenings. Customers pay a fixed price for one or several songs and sing these publicly. Nevertheless, KTV in private rooms has been the dominant since the 1990s.
- The use of private rooms resonates with Chinese group-oriented entertainment. Private rooms are a normal phenomenon in Peking opera, restaurants and discotheques, and minimize contact

- with complete strangers (whereas the dance arena enable meeting strangers).
- KTV has become an important part of business relations. A business meeting in a KTV forges alliances (*guanxi*) through heavy drinking and singing.

Illegal activities

- Given business negotiations, in the PRC, KTV counts as one of the most private and well-protected spaces in the country.
- Most KTVs offer an in-house escort service. One or more hostesses help the costumers drink, sing and have a good time. Sometimes the hostesses offer sexual services.
- Like many profitable entertainment institutions, karaoke has been associated with the mafia and corruption. A number of the first KTV parlors and discotheques in the PRC were run by ex-cops, who had the right connections to survive crack-downs.
- That prostitution takes place in KTV's is an open secret. At the same time KTV is a completely acceptable kind of entertainment, for instance for students to celebrate the end of the semester or even to watch sports matches together (especially for Hong Kongers, who live in notoriously cramped apartments).

Technological developments

- The development of VCD in the 1990s, laser disk and later DVD enabled fans to sing karaoke at home. Typical VCD's would have the original track in mono on the left channel and an instrumental track on the right. DVD technology solved this problem by enabling different audio layers.
- Basic mixers offer basic sound effects such as reverb. It is not yet possible to use Autotune or other software to correct pitch in real time.
- A more recent development is on line karaoke, which is offered by a range of websites and applications, such as changba.

Copyrights

- Because the official video clips are copyrighted or non-existent, many KTVs only provide cheaply produced stereotypical and suggestive visuals. These would typically consist of female models on the beach or among flowers. The lower part of the screen is filled with large characters that fill up along the rhythm of melody. Since 2000 record companies have made deals with karaoke chain stores to provide better quality video clips.
- Copyrights have been arranged in most countries, with karaoke chain stores paying small percentages of their revenue in lump sums to copyright agencies, which in turn redistribute this income among major companies. Both Hong Kong and Taiwan have laws and functioning institutions.
- In the PRC piracy in KTV has been a sore spot for over a decade, especially because the larger KTV companies earn substantial revenues and are not difficult to find. However, although some laws are in place and record companies have won individual cases, the industry lacks one or more properly functioning organizations. The new amendment of the copyright law proposed in March 2012 may change this (see Copyrights below).

Main companies

These companies have branches in Taipei, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Beijing and other Chinese cities.

- Cash Box. Based in Taiwan.
- Holiday. Based in Taiwan.
- Neway. Based in Hong Kong.

- Red MR. Based in Hong Kong.
- Melody. Based in the PRC.

3.5 Talent Shows and Other Music-Related Television Programs

This section focuses on the PRC.

China Central Television (CCTV) has broadcast the Chinese New Year Gala every year since 1983.

- This program has become a standard family event on China's new year's eve (based on the lunar calendar, often late January or early February). It is the PRC's most densely watched TV program, boasting audience of over 700 million in 2007. Even if this figure may be exaggerated, a performance on the New Year Gala can launch the career of a pop singer.
- The show starts at 20:00 and lasts until after midnight. It contains a wide range of television genres, ranging from ballet to Peking opera and from acrobatics to comical sketches (both *xiaopin* and crosstalk).
- The CCTV New Year Gala is an important stage for mass and propaganda music. It has offered twenty years of performances of the official folk singer Song Zuying since 1992.
- Even though pop music was briefly labeled pornographic and decadent in a campaign in 1983, the gala has in fact featured pop music from the beginning. In 1983 the state-employed singer Li Guyi introduced Teresa Teng-inspired pop songs to the wider nation. The next year the Hong Kong singer Zhang Mingmin performed the patriotic pop song "My Chinese Heart".
- Since then the gala has often featured pop music performances of Hong Kong, Taiwanese, Singaporean, Malaysian and (other) overseas Chinese singers. This gives the program an international and cosmopolitan aura, and at the same time suggests that Beijing is the center of Greater China.
- Jay Chou has performed at the gala in 2006, 2008, 2009 and 2011. In 2008 he performed a duet with Song Zuying.

The CCTV also broadcasts the Young Singers Television Contest, since 1984.

- Whereas the CCTV Chinese New Year Gala is a yearly four hour variety show, the CCTV Young Singers Television Contest is biannual, spread out over several weeks and dedicated to singing.
- Candidates are selected across the nation by local state-television stations. There is an opening and a closing ceremony during which artists that compete in different categories together represent their province, in a style modeled on the Olympics and other large-scale sporting events.
- Since 1986 the show distinguished three main singing styles: bel canto, (official) folk and (officially-sanctioned) popular. It also split professional and amateur singers.
- In the early 2000s a category for group performers was established. The popular singing style also became increasingly modeled on mainstream pop: whereas candidates in this category first wore military uniforms they now wore more casual and fashionable outfits.
- However the largest changes were made in the 2006, under the advice of Tian Qing. Because reality television talent shows proved more popular, the Young Singers Television Contest dropped the distinction between professionals and amateurs, and added the category original ecology folksongs (*yuanshengtai*) to tap into the rich musical traditions of China's 'ethnic minorities'.

Reality Television Talent Shows

- In 2004 and 2005 the PRC was swept by the Mengniu Yoghurt Super Girl Contest. The show was modeled on the British format of Pop Idols. Although it was part of a worldwide hype of this format, the Chinese program attracted especially large numbers of viewers. The final episode of Super Girl had a total of 400 million viewers.
- Around 800 million text messages were sent during this season. It was possible to vote several times for your favorite candidate. The program popularized new words (such as PK for a battle of live and death) and spawned debates on the democratic potential of voting by SMS. The accessibility of auditions (over 120,000 candidates applied in several cities) and the slogan ‘sing whenever you want’ promoted the idea that anyone can be a star – which is part of the worldwide democratization of celebrity (capitalized upon by media conglomerates).
- The series was won by Chris Lee with over three million SMS votes. Thanks to her loyal fans (called *yumi*), Lee became a celebrity singer and actress. Also the numbers two (Bibi Zhou) and three (Jane Zhang) have been able to launch singing careers. This has been much more difficult for the many singers that came out of similar programs that were launched in the years after this tremendous success.
- The series was produced by Hunan Satellite TV, which thereby temporarily overtook CCTV as the most watched and most profitable television station. Already during the 2005 season, regulators (i.e. SARFT) issued a series of restrictions of entertainment shows. The rationale behind protecting CCTV’s market share is that CCTV addresses the whole nation (and not just wealthy urbanites) and that it has an educational function (whereas the satellite TV stations are more commercially inclined).
- Hunan Satellite TV had to drop ‘super’ from the title of the program next year (they produced Happy Boys), and include more patriotic songs. Showing the wild behavior of fans was another taboo and a few years later voting through SMS briefly became controversial. A number of scandals, including candidates pleading to jury members and controversial remarks in dating shows lead to clamp down on reality television in 2011, dubbed by the media as ‘entertainment-stopping bill’.
- Now SARFT permits reality television singing contests on the basis of submissions. Guidelines stipulate for instance the maximum amount of time for commercial breaks (resulting in massive product placement within the programs) and the minimum of time a singing contest should spend on actual singing.
- Despite these restrictions, reality television talent shows are a major genre of Chinese television. In 2012 The Voice of China, based on a Dutch format, is all the rage.

Internet

- Taiwanese variety shows such as Kang Xi Lai Le (since 2004) often feature major pop stars and are also hugely popular in the PRC.
- See Music and Video Websites below.

3.6 (International) Promoters

Chinese Artists Abroad

In recent years more Chinese artists and bands have been performing in the West. This is a positive development. However, many of these performances are either one-off shows at China festivals or are joint tours with befriended bands that later tour China in return. Nevertheless, a few companies in the West have a more coherent and long-term record of promoting Chinese music abroad.

- China Music Dish is run by Eric de Fontenay and based in America. China Music Dish selected the Taiwanese band Mayday at Midem 2012.

- Earth Beat is based in Holland. Although the company doesn't specialize in Chinese bands per se, it has been very successful as the international promoter of Hanggai and over the years has built up a knowledge of the Chinese band scene, partly in collaboration with SX.
- SX Music Communications is a new multimedia company that represents a number of Chinese artists in China, such as Hanggai. They also organize Sound of the Xity, a festival and forum where foreign festival organizers select Chinese bands.
- The Chinese record company Maybe Mars promotes its indie artists in the USA, for instance at the festival South by South West.
- Splatter helps overseas advertisement agencies find singers and bands to endorse their products. It is related to Split Works (see below).
- After living, performing and promoting rock music in China for several years, Johnathan W Campbell moved back to Canada, wrote down his experiences in the book *Red Rock* and continues to promote Chinese music.

Western Artists in China

In recent years more Western artists and bands have been performing in China. This is a positive development.

- Local branches of international record companies are often directly involved in promoting Western artists in China, including organizing concerts.
- Festivals such as Modern Sky/Strawberry, Zebra and West Lake directly approach foreign bands, but usually are not involved in organizing tours.

Given the importance of personal relations (sometimes mystified with the Chinese word *guanxi*) and the frequency of last minute changes, it is wise to have someone on the ground if you want to organize a tour in China. That said, you should know that you have many options. Here is a very incomplete list (please feel free to contact me for additions).

- Almost all Chinese record companies and larger music venues can help set up small tours, and will sometimes propose promotional strategies, including bringing out a record for the Chinese market.
- Logistix. In the 1990s, Udo Hoffman started organizing concerts of Western jazz bands in Beijing. Since then he has been organizing events, in more recent years mainly in collaboration with the German government. He also helped Chinese bands perform in Berlin in 1993.
- Wu Promotions specializes in classical music and jazz.
- SX Music Communications (see above).
- Split Works organizes concerts and a festival (Black Rabbit) with mainly foreign artists in China. It is related to Splatter (see above).
- Yang Yu of the website Rock in China has a long track record of promoting Western music in China.

3.7 Music and Video Websites

The absolute and relative contribution of online sales to the music industry is growing worldwide, reaching 5,2 billion US dollar or 32% in 2011. China follows the same trend, albeit more modestly. However, almost all of the income is earned by mobile (around 2,3 billion RMB in 2011). Websites have earned 380 million or around 8% of the music revenue in 2011 and 410 million in 2012.

Mobile

- Mobile is dominated by China Mobile. Its ring tones are downloaded by students and migrant workers, who may not have a lot of spending power but whose numbers are vast. The range of musical tastes of these groups is relatively limited. The copyright holder (called CP or content

provider) usually gets around 1% of the revenue, 4% goes to the SP or service provider and 95% is earned by China Mobile. There are rumors that employees of China Mobile demand kickbacks for favorable placements, such as topping a download list.

Music distribution

It has proven difficult worldwide to build a business model just on the basis of music. Websites that enable you to meet strangers that have the same music preferences invariably fail. This is even more true for China, where audiences are reluctant to pay for music and it is difficult to target specific audiences because music preferences are not strongly diversified by genres. Still there are a number of websites that focus on sharing music.

- Xiami is the PRC's largest free music sharing website with 300 thousand daily users in 2011. All music of its vast catalog is available for live streaming and downloading.
- [Indievox](#)
- KKBox in Taiwan, where customers pay a monthly lump sum rather than fee for each song.

Video distribution

Audiences retain more attention and place more reviews if a website offers video, which makes these websites more interesting for advertisement agencies.

- Young urbanites in the PRC rarely listen to on-the-air radio and do not watch much TV. They are more attracted to on line content, which is more liberal and has less commercials. In response, newspapers and radio and TV stations have developed into large media conglomerates that also have a substantial online presence.
- Youtube, Vimeo and other global video streaming websites are blocked in mainland China, but accessible in Taiwan and Hong Kong.
- Youku and Tudou are mainland China's main video streaming companies. In 2011 they announced that they would merge.
- Letv is a smaller company that also produces its own programs, sometimes discussing music.
- Mogo offers live recordings of rock shows and interviews with bands.
- [Yinyuetai](#) provides video clips of mainstream pop artists.
- VeryCD is a download website (emule) that also offers on line streaming content.

Music services of social networking sites.

Another solution to make online music listening profitable is to embed this service into larger platforms.

- Facebook is blocked in mainland China, but accessible in Taiwan and Hong Kong.
- QQ music has 1.1 million daily users in 2011 and is the PRC's only profitable music service. However, its contribution to the total revenue of QQ is dwarfed by for instance gaming.
- Sina Weibo is a Chinese microblogging site. Its music listening service encourages users to create albums of their favorite songs and share them with their followers.
- Douban is a review website. It doesn't provide links for download, but it does provide on line radio and offers bands and musicians the opportunity to upload and share their own music. Douban also provides the most comprehensive list of live shows and cultural events in various cities in the PRC, making it a powerful and attractive platform for concert organizers and bands. Many bands have uploaded (samples of) their music. Douban de facto functions as the PRC's myspace or bandcamp (although all downloads are free).

Interactive music sites

Independent music sites that offer its users to interact with the music have proven to be relatively

successful. Audiences can not only select and comment upon songs that suit their personality, but use online software to engage with the music directly, either by singing to it (online karaoke) or by creating remixes (online DJ). Other variants offer music related games, such recognizing songs.

- Changba. Popular Karaoke app.
- [5sing](#). Record and share your own vocal tracks, karaoke, a capela or original.
- [The sixth room](#). Create and share your own remixes and MC tracks online.
- I am the king of guessing songs. Popular app. Samples the 200 most popular songs.

3.8 Charts and Award Ceremonies

Unlike the Grammy Awards in the USA and Oricon in Japan, there is no authoritative list of pop songs in China.

Hong Kong

- The Jade Solid Gold Best Ten Songs (since 1984) and the RTHK Top 10 Golden Songs Award (since 1978) are authoritative in Hong Kong. Since 2001 Mainland Chinese stars have been able to participate in the RTHK Top 10, but given the overall decline of cantopop since the late 1990s, its influence has waned.

Taiwan

- In tune with the dominance of Taiwanese popular music since 2000, the Taiwanese Golden Melody Awards remains a trend setter in Chinese-language pop music. It was established in its current form in 1990, but goes back to the 1980s. In 1998 it opened the competition to all singers who had published Chinese-language albums in Taiwan.
- The first two steps in the Golden Melody Awards selection procedure involve consultation with large numbers of specialists, for shortlisting candidates. Only in the final phase does a small committee meet to rank the contesters, which means that the selection and tastes of this committee are contested, and that committee members are sometimes incapable of awarding their personal favorite because he or she didn't make it to the shortlist. Given the fact that controversy over such influential gatekeeping seems inevitable, and the relative unreliability of hit lists in the PRC, the Golden Melody Awards functions well, albeit perhaps conservatively.

PRC

- Since 1992 the first mainland Chinese award ceremony was held in Guangzhou. Beijing Music Radio organizing the first national Chinese Popular Song Awards in 1994. Other yearly hit lists quickly followed, including Channel V's Global Sinophone Music Charts, which have been available to PRC audiences via satellite since 1998, and a cooperation between CCTV and MTV from 1999 onwards.
- PRC audiences eagerly anticipated these ceremonies, which provided rare opportunities to see pop stars who mostly dwelt in Hong Kong and Taiwan. This success prompted a proliferation of awards in the late 1990s, and by 2002 there were allegedly more than 2000 award ceremonies. All these events vied for celebrity presence, which led them to invent new awards, for instance 'favorite' in addition to 'best', 'most respected', and awards named after the event. In general, award ceremony organizers became more occupied with negotiating with stars and their record companies than with a fair and transparent selection procedure. By 2001 it was a public secret that all the stars present at an award ceremony would get a prize, even if they hadn't published new material for years.

- These yearly red carpet events are often sponsored by companies, which partly explains why exposure trumps credibility. Because these companies rarely sponsor radio, radio has a different dynamics. Weekly radio charts are usually established through the tastes of individual DJs and hearsay, and are usually open to suggestions of record companies. According to a 2001 article, plugging a song in a radio chart usually costs between 200 and 1000 RMB, and occasionally 10,000 RMB. If anything these numbers have probably increased considerably over the last ten years. Singers and the industry as a whole seem to regard this as an acceptable instrument for ‘stir-frying’ songs into hits, which also includes paying journalists for favorable reviews.
- In 2008, the PRC Top Chinese Music Chart Awards (founded in 2001) attempted to restore credibility by appointing a relatively transparent jury of twenty prominent musicians, producers and critics and by having the election procedure supervised by New York-based auditor Deloitte, which also handles the Grammy Awards envelopes.
- Several websites (see above) offer lists of most downloaded artists or of tracks with the most favorable reviews.

3.9 Educational Institutions

Conservatories

Taiwan and Hong Kong don’t have conservatories, but universities have music departments, including music trajectories on affiliated middle schools. For instance the Hong Kong Academy for Performing art has a prestigious [School of Music](#), with good connections with conservatories in the West.

This system also exists in the PRC, but there are also nine major conservatories, which attract students across the nation and sometimes beyond. These institutions produce some of the best musicians in the world.

Many of the conservatories in the PRC offer bachelor degrees in various vocal styles, various instruments, composing, conducting, theory and music education. The vocal styles, instruments and composing courses may include traditional Chinese musical traditions, but the overall organization and teaching style is modeled on similar institutions in the Soviet Union. Although many conservatories were established in the 1920s and 1930s, they were restructured in the 1950s. After the 1980s western European and American influences have increased.

- The Central Conservatory of Music (Beijing, since 1950) focuses on Western art music. It’s the leading institution in the PRC and the only one to receive support of the central government.
- The China Conservatory of Music (Beijing, since 1964) focuses on traditional Chinese music.
- The Shanghai Conservatory of Music (Shanghai, since 1927).
- [Shenyang Conservatory of Music](#) (Shengyang, Liaoning Province, since 1938) has a popular music department that began teaching programs of pop, jazz and karaoke singing in the mid 1990s.
- The Sichuan Conservatory of Music (Chengdu, Sichuan Province, since 1939) taught the pop singers Chris Lee and Tan Weiwei, among others.
- The Tianjin Conservatory of Music (Tianjin, since 1958). Its departments included Music theory and Composition, Musicology, Orchestral music, Chinese National & Traditional Music, Keyboard performance, Vocal performance, Music Education, Pop Music, Art management, Dancing, Drama & Movie.
- The Wuhan Conservatory of Music (Wuhan, since 1928).
- The Xi’an Conservatory of Music (Xi’an, since 1949).
- The Xinghai Conservatory of Music (Guangzhou, since 1957).

Private music schools

- Some conservatories have joined forces to establish private music schools. The Central Conservatory in Beijing, The Shanghai Conservatory, and the Xinghai Conservatory in Guangzhou, for example, jointly founded the [Guangzhou School of Piano Stars](#).
- The privately established [Beijing Midi School of Music](#) established in 1993 offers a number of courses in pop and rock performance, including jazz. Its mission is ‘to promote an artistic and humanistic theory of modern music while offering classes in advanced musical techniques.’ The School's Dean Zhang Fan says that when the school was established, education in modern music was virtually non-existent and that nobody really knew how to teach modern music education or what precisely should be taught. When he became dean of the school, the first thing he did was to select and translate modern music teaching materials from abroad. Zhang and his assistants spent almost two years translating and editing teaching materials for guitar, bass, drums and other instruments. The school enabled a generation of out-of-towner rock musicians to move to Beijing in the first years of the 21st millennium, when the school also organized a music festival. Also with a nation-wide exam for guitar, the Midi School of Music aims at establishing standards.

Who educates pop musicians?

- Most pop stars, rock musicians and Djs don't come out of conservatories or universities. More so than in other places the gap between the official institutions and the commercial market in China is huge. People trained in ‘art music’ institutions are sometimes called *xueyuanpai* or academic clique. Surprisingly few of them are involved in for instance the experimental music or sound art scene. However, the gap between the official and the popular is decreasing on other fronts, and perhaps conservatories will open up too.
- The private music schools have had an influence, although its programs are relatively short – from three months up to two years.
- In the West a substantial number of successful pop musicians are art schools graduates. Also in China there are important connections with art institutions. Art schools foster creativity (rather than technical skills) and encourage students reflect on the impact of their art on audiences.
- The bottom line is that most pop singers and musicians are self-taught.

4. Genres and Styles

Whereas the music market in the West is stratified according to musical genres, in China these distinctions are less articulated. This doesn't mean popular music in Chinese languages is an indifferent blurb, but that other ways of relating songs and singers to communities run through and to some extent challenge genres, all of which are imported from the West. In short, I want to warn Western readers for Eurocentrism, for assuming that Western musical genres such as punk or hip hop mean the same thing and function the same way in China as they do elsewhere.

- Pop singers rarely record albums in a single genre, let alone base their careers on them. Wang Jing has called this the ‘chop-suey’ style (2008), comparable to Indian ‘masala’. For instance, the albums of Jay Chou are carefully planned to contain ‘slow songs’ and ‘quick songs’, and more generally to encompass a wide range of potential genres, including r&b, hip-hop, country & western, Latin and a style dubbed Chinese Wind. Although albums may be packaged around genre-related imagery, such as the cowboy on Jay Chou's *On the Run* (2007), the genre in question is rarely manifest in more than two songs out of the ten an album usually contains.
- Over 80% of the Grammy Awards are awarded in categories with genre-labels. By contrast, the

Golden Melody Awards (see above) makes a major division into popular music on the one hand and traditional and art music on the other, and defines only a few awards within the traditional and art music category as motivated by genre. Most of its categories rather depend on (1) language (2) profession and (3) gender.

- Chinese CD shops, publication and websites habitually organize (Chinese) music into the categories of (1) language-geography-ethnicity, (2) generation and (3) gender, with the third of these modified to distinguish between male singers, female singers and group or band performances. Sometimes all non-mainstream popular music is filed under the ‘band’ label, including solo albums of rock singers. This points to a final principle of organization: (4) marketability. Marketability addresses the gap I observe in the PRC between mainstream pop and the music classified as non-mainstream, alternative, small-groupish, underground and rock.
- In short, imported genres labels interact with these four, more basic ways of differentiating music, creating a musical landscape that is in flux, as it should be.
- We look forward to the emergence of typically Chinese genres, comparable to enka in Japan or tango in Argentine and Uruguay.

4.1 Rock Music

Rock-Pop

Rock music is a huge musical genre that includes many subdivisions. Historically, rock has been easily co-opted into the mainstream and often been difficult to distinguish from it, prompting scholars such as Motti Regev to focus on the pop-rock continuum in his discussions of the global dominance of Anglo-American popular music.

Rock Mythology

Nevertheless, rock music often defines itself in opposition to mainstream pop, which it accuses of being socio-politically irrelevant and overly commercialized. Jeroen de Kloet’s concept of the ‘rock mythology’ is a good tool to make people aware of their naive believe in rock’s power. On page 26 of *China with a Cut* (2010) he defines the rock mythology as ‘a set of narratives which produce rock as a distinct music world that is, first and foremost, authentic, but also subcultural, masculine, rebellious and (counter) political. ... It is the rock mythology ... supplying the glue that binds producers, musicians, and audiences together; it is the basis of the *production* of the rock culture.’

Bands

Rock in the West is partly recognizable as a band sound, with heavy involvement of several if not all band members in both composition and (live) performance. However, almost all (early) Chinese rock performers were individuals rather than bands: Sam Hui, Luo Dayou, Cui Jian. Record companies signed individuals rather than bands for practical reasons, but there are also cultural reasons relating to highly personal networks (or *guanxi*). More united bands started emerging in Taiwan and the PRC in the later half of the 1990s, especially after punk, metal and new wave hypes.

Hong Kong

- After the Beatles performed in Hong Kong in 1964 a number of bands emerged, most of which sang in English. When these bands switched to Cantonese they were dubbed Cantorock.
- However the lead singers of these bands, such as Sam Hui and Alan Tam, embarked on solo careers and soon dominated what became known as Cantopop. Whereas Hui wrote the songs of his first album and some of the lyrics were touched on socio-political issues, both these featured disappeared on subsequent albums.

- In the mid 1980s a new scene emerged, with bands such as Tatming Pair (with Anthony Wong), Raidas (with the lyricist Lin Xi) and Beyond. These bands and duos experimented with synthesizers and gave a new impulse to the Hong Kong music industry. Beyond comes closest to the rock mythology, even though most of their songs are love songs.
- The few rock bands or indie groups that came out of Hong Kong in the 2000s have a electropop sound, and focus more on recordings than on live shows. Anthony Wong's company People Mountain People Sea promotes alternative pop groups.

Taiwan

- Luo Dayou ended the folk sound of the Campus Song Movement with a more militant rock sound in 1982. Luo composed his own songs and wrote socially engaged lyrics. He became a huge pop star, and Jay Chou, who also composes his own music (but not his lyrics), is often compared with him.
- Since the early 1980s, Taiwanese bands and singer-songwriters have been able and willing to find larger audience and have commercial success. This has relaxed the opposition between mainstream pop and underground rock aesthetics. In other words, from the start many Taiwanese bands sound quite poppy and far removed from the subversion proscribed by the rock mythology. This includes recent examples such as Mayday, So Dark Green and Tizzy Bac, none of which discuss politics in their songs.
- ChthoniC is a long-standing Taiwanese metal band.

Beijing

- Beijing is the center of rock music in the PRC. The rock mythology resonates well with North Chinese machismo and with the politicization of culture in the capital. In the early years, between 1986 and 1995, intellectuals embraces rock culture as a form political subversion, debating the 'rock spirit' of Woodstock.
- This politicization is more ambiguous if we look at the actual practice of musicians. Cui Jian became the PRC's first and as of yet only rock star in 1986. His song "Nothing to my Name" became a huge hit and an anthem of the 1989 student protests. Cui also performed on Tian'anmen square during the protests, but has always maintained that the song is a love song and that he only represents himself.
- This first generation of rock musicians grew up in the privileged military compounds of Beijing. Since the 1970s, these small communities did have access to foreign popular culture, which was distributed as negative examples and evidence of the West's imminent demise.
- During the 1990s there were not many rock venues. Bands performed in restaurants, hotels and night clubs. The first record companies emerged, and Taiwanese companies financed albums of the metal band Tang Dynasty and of Dou Wei, Zhang Chu and He Yong. Inspired by Beyond, Beijing-based bands such as Zero Point, Wang Feng and later Xu Wei became pop-rock bands, and despite their commercial success are often excluded from rock history.
- By the mid-1990s a new generation of Beijing bands emerged around a number of venues in the university area of Wudaokou, such as Scream Club. These bands were mainly inspired by punk (the Ramones) and grunge (Nirvana). Successful bands include Underbaby, Brain Failure, Reflector, Lure (now disbanded) and New Pants. A number of these bands published albums with Modern Sky.
- During the late 1990s rock bands also emerged in other parts of China. Yan Jun and other music critics promoted DIY and the idea of 'the underground', challenging Beijing's centrality. Still many of these musicians traveled to Beijing, for instance to attend the Midi School of Modern Music. These out-of-towner musicians were inspired by grunge (Nirvana) and rap-metal (Rage

Against the Machine). Successful bands include the Fly, No (later Zuoxiao Zuzhou), Cold Blooded Animal (later X.T.X), Tongue (now disbanded), Muma and Miserable Faith. Slightly later bands such as SUBS and PK14 have some of the anger of this generation, but are also influenced by the groovy new wave sound of the next generation.

- In 2001, the Second Hand Rose's slogan 'Big brother, so you play rock but what's the use?' suggested that the underground had lost contact with the society it claimed to speak out for. Slowly the anti-mainstream stance of these bands changed, and rock again embarked on the path of co-optation in the mainstream. For instance, X.T.X and Miserable Faith absorbed influences of reggae.
- The proliferation of music festivals and the diversification of society gave bands more opportunities. Younger bands also grew up in relative comfort and opted for a more danceable and hedonistic sound, influenced by new wave (Joy Division) and electroclash. After 2005, a number of these bands emerged around the venue D-22 and its label Maybe Mars, including Joyside, Carsick Cars, Queen Sea Big Shark, Hedgehog and Pet Conspiracy.
- There are now more bands from outside of Beijing with a nation-wide success, such as Omnipotent Youth Society (Shijiazhuang), Cold Fairyland (Shanghai) and Li Zhi (Nanjing).
- Throughout these generations there have been bands that have incorporated Chinese instruments, but this trend is less clear in the latest generation. Example of 'sinified rock' are, in chronological order: Cui Jian, Tang Dynasty, The Master Says, Zuoxiao Zuzhou, X.T.X., Second Hand Rose, Earlap and Nancheng Erge.
- Foreign musicians and promoters have been active in various scenes every step of the way.

4.2 Jazz

Shanghai

- Jazz was an important influence on Shanghai music in the 1930s. Jazz reemerged in the 1980s when the 1920s and 1930s were redefined as the glory days of Shanghai.
- Shanghai is home to a wide range of jazz venues (see Venues above) and festivals (see Festivals above). It's conservatory teaches in jazz and houses a jazz orchestra (see Educational Institutions above).
- Many of the concerts are commercial, with artists performing standards. Coco Zhao is a well-known jazz singer. The pipa player and singer Lin Di has formed a swing shine trio that performs new arrangements of old Shanghai pop songs.

Beijing

- Beijing's jazz scene is less lively than Shanghai's. Still there are a few venues (see Venues above) and a festival (see Festivals above).
- Several members of Cui Jian's band performed jazz and opened jazz bars, including the saxophone player Liu Yuan (CD Cafe) and the drummer Bei Bei.
- Li Tiejiao is a free jazz saxophone player who also organizes concerts and tours with international artists.

Dutch

- A relatively large number of Dutch jazz musicians have performed in Beijing and Shanghai over the years. See below for more info.

4.3 Disco, House and Techno

Discotheques

Break dancing was popular across China in the late 1980s and early 1990s, partly because of Michael Jackson (who performed in Taipei in 1995). Discotheques followed in the early 1990s. Across China nightlife consists of restaurants, night clubs (with variety shows), discotheques and karaoke.

- In Beijing, the first large discotheques such as the Rock and Roll, Babyface, Nightman and NASA were run by ex-cops who had the right connections to survive crack-downs.
- These discotheques typically cater to groups that rent a table by ordering a bottle of liquor (usually whiskey) which comes with soft drinks (usually iced tea), ice cubes and sometimes a fruit platter.
- Most discotheques play foreign house and remixes of Chinese pop songs. Some play hip-hop, urban and latin.
- DJ's in discotheques rarely see themselves as artists. They don't record their own remixes and don't play at other places or festivals.
- The mixes of DJ Shitou became a big hit on line in 2011 because of his hilarious MC-ing, parodying official sounding voices, foul language, random shouts and poor English.

Club Culture

- DJ's in clubs see themselves as artists. They build up their repertoire, make recordings and their names feature prominently in the promotion of the event. These events are also more likely to include a cover charge, comparable to live houses in rock music.
- In 1997 the Swiss China-based organization Cheese (Michael & Philip) organized the first rave on the Great Wall. The same year the radio DJ Zhang Youdai started hosting techno parties in his bar Keep in Touch and the guitar player Wengweng started organizing and performing at club nights. In 2001, DJ Wengweng set-up the party organization China Pump Factory with DJ Yang Bing and the Briton Will. The organization hosted shows in the larger discotheques and one at the Great Wall. With club 88 this music style had a place of its own.
- In Guangdong, club culture was promoted almost singlehandedly by Michael Neebing. Neebing took part in a Modern Asia International Music Fair in Hong Kong in 1996 which began a close relationship with Hong Kong-France independent dance music label [Technasia](#). In 2001, Neebing organized a series of parties for Future Mix in Guangzhou's first dance music club called FACE.
- In the first few years many people visited the clubs and a number of foreign DJ's visited. However, after the initial hype faded, the development of club culture in China slowed down and a number of clubs shut down, including a host of Zhang Youdai's venues (Cloud 9) and Club 88. In 2012 there are five places in Beijing that regularly organize DJ nights, two of which are underground basements. Foreigners still make up a substantial part of the audience, organizers and DJs. In short, as of yet club culture has not been able yet to profit of the success of discotheques.
- Local party organizations include Wasabi Sound, Acupuncture Records, Cheese and the China Pump Factory.
- Local DJ's include Yang Bing, Ben Huang and Mickey Zhang. Jerry Lo is a well-known Taiwanese DJ.

4.4 Experimental Music and Sound Art

Experimental music and sound art are China's musical avant garde. My choice for these two labels illustrates my hesitation over whether to call this music at all. It is a small scene, perhaps even marginal, but like Japanese noise, it is very vibrant.

Beginnings

2003 is the year the experimental music scene emerged in the PRC. This is suggested by the four CDs of *An Anthology of Chinese Electronic Music 1992-2008* that the prestigious Belgium label Sub Rosa published, which furthermore suggest that the PRC overtook other Chinese speaking regions since 2006 in terms of output. Additionally, in 2003 the four day festival Sounding Beijing took place (organized by Yao Dajun), offering Chinese musicians for the first time the opportunity to perform on the same stage as internationally renowned sound artists.

Inspirations and connections

- Rock music. In the early 2000s a substantial number of (predominantly Beijing-based) rock musicians became frustrated with the limitations of rock. This energy fueled innovations in the band scene, most notably the emergence of parody and self-ridicule, and new scenes around folksong and experimental music.
- Western art music. The emergent scene did not find support in Chinese conservatories and hardly any experimental musicians have a conservatory background.
- Dance music. Although not entirely non-existent, connections with the dance music scene have remained limited. By and large, engaging with experimental music is a critical intellectual activity. It is to be contemplated sitting or standing rather than experienced dancing. That said, in other ways it is very physical. Sound artists return to the raw materiality of sound. They confront audiences with (deviant) sexuality and interact with the space of the performance.
- Visual art. Experimental music has many connections with visual and performance art. In the 1990s Li Zhenhua, Qiu Zhijie and others stumbled upon sound in their performance, video and digital art. Like experimental music, site-specific art engaged the physical environment of the performance. It also challenged to the co-optation of art in museums and galleries. However, whereas site-specific art ostensibly sought to get *out* of museums, sound art strove to get *in* the circuit of museums and art festivals. The double album [Music for Museums](#) with music by Yan Jun, Zafka and others was part of an exhibition at the Arnolfini in Bristol in 2008. In this light, experimental music is a (hip) global idiom that enables former rock musicians and tech-savvy nerds to organize solo performances that spectacularly display the latest Western trend in China and vice versa.

Ambient and Soundscapes

- Yan Jun is a central figure in this scene. Emerging as a poet and rock critic in the late 1990s, he transformed into a sound artist and curator after 2003. Still, his musical activities in the 2000s can be seen as furthering his underground rock challenge to posture rock and state rituals with other means. In 2003, he added the sublabel Kwanyin Records for experimental music to his label Sub Jam. Between 2005 and 2010 he organized the capital's only weekly series of experimental music shows, titled Waterland Kwanyin as well as the yearly open-air festival Mini Midi. It's slogan was 'Noise is Free'.
- The duo FM3 (since 1999) had a world wide hit with the Buddha Machine in 2005, a low-fi device with an in-built speaker based on sutra-chanting machines at Buddhist temples that loops nine of their drones. Brian Eno was an early supporter. Similarly, many of Wang Fan's albums breath a kind of religiosity.
- After 2005 there was a brief fad of soundscape projects. Many of these projects promoted awareness of the urban environment and especially of the (social) value of old neighborhoods that were about to be demolished as part of demolition and relocation projects. Yan Jun was involved in many of them. Hitlike in Harbin, Yin Yi in Shanghai and Edwin Lo and Anson Mak

in Hong Kong have also set up many sound walks and soundscape websites over the years.

Noise

- Feng Jiangzhou is a painter. He also was the front man of the rock band the Fly in the mid-1990s. After the Fly disbanded, Feng started making noise, partly inspired by Japanese examples.
- Yao Dajuin is based in Berkeley and an important figure in the Taiwanese and international sound art scene, through his website and record label post-concrete and the podcast China NewEar.
- Li Jianhong of 2pi (aka Second Skin) is a guitar player who hails from Hangzhou, where he also operates a small record label and organizes a festival.
- Sun Dawei (Panda Twin, Sulumi) studied for a year at the Shenyang conservatory, played in punk bands and started making noise in 2000. Between 2003 and 2009 he ran Shan Shui records.
- Zhang Changcun published the album *The Mountain Swallowing Sadness* in 2006 with Sub Rosa. Performances of his Shanghai-based band Torturing Nurse have featured bondage and S&M.
- Carsick Cars lead singer and guitar player Jeff Zhang (Zhang Shouwang) has a noise group White (and White+) that has toured Europe with the German post-industrial rock band Einstürzende Neubauten.
- Josh Feola has been active promoter and chronicler of experimental music in China, through the venue XP (Beijing), the website Pangbianr, and the festival Sally Can't Dance. XP also has a CD shop.

4.5 Hip Hop and Rap Music

Also in China, hip hop is strongly associated with Afro-American culture, even though some of the influences are translated through Japanese and South-Korean artists. Nevertheless, more than any other genre, rap stresses its neighborhood and local environment.

- Rappers express a pride in their local culture and comment on local issues. Rap pioneers the use of local expressions and dialects, sometimes interspersed with English.
- However, the lyrics of hip hop are much more hybrid and localized than its music. Cross fertilizations with traditional and folk music genres such as *kuaiban* are rare, mainly because these folk traditions 'rap' in a very fast but nearly constant rhythm, i.e. they are not groovy.

Recording artists

- Hip hop, rap and r&b are central to the success Jay Chou since 2001. Chou is often criticized for not articulating clearly, but precisely his slurs enable him to avoid the problem that rapping in Mandarin Chinese can become monotonous because every syllable tends to be (almost) equally stressed.
- Mc Hotdog is the most successful Chinese singer that self-identifies as a rapper. He broke through in 2001, appealing to youngsters with tracks about drugs, exams and urban ennui. Although he has famously eulogized his love for local girls, Mc Hotdog raps in Mandarin and stays clear from such sensitive issues as Taiwanese independence. Also his relation with mainstream pop remains (productively? comfortably?) ambiguous. Mc Hotdog has dissed mainstream Korean and Taiwanese pop artists, but is currently signed with the major local record company Rock Records and has at times worked together with pop singers.
- Other Taiwanese rappers, such as DogG and the group Machi rap in Taiwanese and are

outspoken supporters of Taiwanese independence. The front man of Machi, Jeff Huang, was a member of Taiwan's first hip hop group, L.A. Boyz. Since its begin in 1992 that group combined slick dance moves with a sense of pride over Taiwan's success world-wide. The band members grew up in America. Jeff Huang's brother, Stanley Huang became a successful solo singer after L.A. Boyz disbanded in 1997.

- The rap duo Softhard introduced hip hop to Hong Kong in the early 1990s. The rap metal group LMF (Lazy Motha Fucka) has a longer career (from 1993 to 2003 and again since 2009) and stirred more debates. Whereas cantopop generally employs a highly stylized, poetic kind of Cantonese, LMF addresses listeners with their street language, full of foul expressions (*cukou*) and wordplay. Also in terms of subject matter they align themselves with the Hong Kong working class. This was not always well received by the (middle-class) music media and audiences also remained divided. Some of the members of this 'music collective' as they call themselves, also have recorded noteworthy solo material and side projects, including Mc Yan and DJ Tommy.
- Edison Chen (since his 2004 album) and the somewhat silly group FAMA (since 2002) are two examples of Hong Kong artists that have been commercially successful with a hip hop sound. Both these artists have recorded albums in Mandarin as well as Cantonese.
- In 2001 Yin Ts'ang was the first mainland Chinese hip hop group to sign a record deal. Three of the four members of Yin Ts'ang come from North-America, but the group rapped in Mandarin Chinese and eulogized Beijing. Since then a small scene has emerged, with groups such as Longjing, Xinjiekou and Dragon Tongue Squad.
- In recent years, the huge success of South Korean popular music further promoted dance moves and dress codes based on hip hop among general audiences.

4.6 Urban Folk

Folk music has continually fed into popular music and mass music.

Folk Anthologies

Since the early 20th century, Chinese researchers have been collecting, revising and redistributing folk songs. The Communists have continued this practice, publishing huge anthologies of folk melodies in cypher notation. These efforts captured songs that would otherwise have disappeared without a trace. However in the process songs were adapted to Western equal tuning to suit cypher notation, written down in standard Chinese rather than dialect, and erotic and other 'reactionary' expressions were replaced with praises of Mao Zedong.

In 1938 the Beijinger Wang Luobin composed his first song based on a folk melody. He would continue to collect and revise folk songs for fifty years, mostly in China's northwest. Many of his folk-inspired compositions became hugely popular in the PRC and beyond. For instance, in 1983 the Taiwanese pop star Luo Dayou reused "Youth Dance", a Xinjiang folk song over which Wang Luobin claimed copyright.

In short, folk and pop are intertwined. Zeng Suijin and other Chinese scholar even propose to see pop music as modern folk music. This reflects the idea that folksongs do not represent only the countryside but the whole nation. Indeed, the Chinese word for folksong, *min'ge*, implies a connection with *renmin*, 'the People,' as in 'the People's Republic of China'.

To sidestep these debates we will focus on urban folk here. Urban folk is a kind of commercial popular music. Its main instrument is the acoustic guitar and its main source of inspiration is American folk. Although adaptation of folk songs by the official singers also cater to urbanites, I will discuss them under the rubric of Mass and Propaganda music (see below).

Nostalgic Perfectionism

The Campus Song movement of 1975-1982 in Taiwan initially called itself folksong movement. It's guitar-based songs expressed dreams of a better place. Folk came to represent an untainted and eternally unattainable 'true, good, and beautiful' (*zhen shan mei*). This nostalgic perfectionism made these folksongs suitable for mainstream pop (see Taiwan above).

Entrepreneurs in Hong Kong and the PRC tried to emulate the success of Taiwanese Campus Song. In 1993 in Beijing Gao Xiaosong, Huang Liaoyuan and other heavyweight music producers launched the careers of Ai Jing, Lao Lang, Ye Pei and A Duo under the banner 'campus folk tune' (*xiaoyuan minyao*). Ai Jing's hit "My 1997" wondered about the opportunities the upcoming return of Hong Kong might have on a personal level, but by and large these and later folk pop singers such as Pu Shu and Wang Juan remained within the apolitical 'true, good, and beautiful'. Zhang Chu also emerged in 1993 with a more unpolished folk rock sound. His poetic lyrics equally appeal to college and university students.

Indie pop, which emerged in more recent years in Taiwan, is related to this strand of urban folk music (see below).

Authenticity

In the late 1990s the duo Wild Children started to collect and adapt northwest Chinese folk tunes to guitar. The fact that they valued authenticity over marketability has earned them much praise in the band scene. When the anti-mainstream stance of underground music was exposed as putting rockers out of touch with reality and The People, Wild Children's style of humbleness, traveling and learning from locals offered a way out. More concretely, the duo opened the River Bar in Beijing, which between 2001 and 2003 became a hotbed for the emerging folk scene. IZ, Yang Yi, Xiao He, Wan Xiaoli and Zhou Yunpeng first performed here.

Meanwhile in Taiwan expressions of local and aboriginal Taiwanese identities were becoming less repressed. This enabled the emergence of folk albums by aboriginal singers and bands, such as Panai, Purdur and A Moving Sound. Many of these albums were published by TCM records (since 1999). The band Work Exchange successfully helped mobilizing a local community to stop the building of a dam, which helped gaining national recognition for their Hakka music. Also in his solo career lead singer Lin Sheng-xiang stresses authenticity and closeness to his local community.

Avant-garde Folk

In the PRC, guitar-based American-influenced folk is a more or less coherent musical genre. Whereas in the West it may have anti-urban and anti-modern tendencies, in China it to some extent represents cosmopolitanism and modernity. Many Chinese folk artists have no qualms whatsoever against using the latest technology, and making this audible in their shows and recordings. After his important 1999 self-recorded dialect folk album, Hu Mage started making avant-garde sound collages. Xiao He makes extensive use of his loop station and midi guitar in his improvised live performances and has added quirky background electronics to Zhou Yunpeng's successful, socially engaged album *China's Children*. In this light, even Dou Wei's ambient jazz, Zuoxiao Zuzhou's experimental and noisy pop rock, and Liang Yiyuan Daoist sound collages can be subsumed under folk.

4.7 Indie Pop

Indie pop is my translation of *xiaoqingxin*. *Xiaoqingxin*, which literally means ‘little clear new’, is used to describe a kind of cute (or *kawaii*) yet empowering urban sound that is popular among middle-class girls. It is also used as a shorthand for this social group and as such related to older group labels such as *wenyi qingnian*, ‘cultural youth’, *xiaozi*, ‘petite bourgeoisie’ and *xiaozhong*, ‘small mass, small group, semi-elite’. Next to PRC propaganda music it is one of the few Chinese popular music styles that may develop into a fully fledged indigenous genre.

That said, indie pop combines folk, pop and rock elements. Singers usually play self-composed songs on an acoustic guitar that recount personal experiences. Next to heartbreak, traveling is a returning topic. That some singers have recorded whole albums in English further illustrates the cosmopolitan aspirations of *xiaoqingxin*. The vocal delivery is melodic, girlish and poppy, and also the production of the albums is relatively slick. Still many of the female singers portray a kind of fragile independence that borrows some of its power from the rawer sounds of rock, audible also in the instrumentation of the songs and the stress on liveness.

Influences

- The novels and lyrics of the Taiwanese writer San Mao, often sung by Qi Yu. Mainly in the 1980s.
- The Hong Kong pop diva Faye Wong, who presented dreamy, disinterested and autonomous femininities, combining rock, pop, triphop and other sounds. Mainly in the 1990s.
- Taiwan-based female singer-songwriters, including Tanya Chua, Sandee Chan and Mavis Fan, who since the late 1990s have sought to introduce alternative, gothic and experimental sounds into the mainstream.

Singers

- Cheer Chen scored a hit with “The Meaning of Traveling” in 2004.
- Deserts Chang performs with her band Algae and is signed to Sony BMG in 2006.
- The band Natural Q was formed in 2003. In 2006 lead singer Waa Wei embarked on a solo career.
- So Dark Green is one of the most popular Chinese bands. It consists of men, but has a similar aesthetic as the indie pop singers.
- Joanna Wang is the daughter of a famous producer. She grew up in the US and mostly sings English covers.
- Many contestants in talent shows sing in this style.

4.8 World Music and Ethnic Pop

World music caters to the international or Western market and ethnic pop to national audiences. They have a similar dilemma:

- On one extreme, the exoticism and orientalism of both world music and ethnic pop can promote racist stereotypes, and at times exploit musicians and musical traditions of the global south. Ethnic pop for instance reiterates the widespread prejudice that ‘ethnic minorities’ and aboriginal peoples are wild, promiscuous and better in singing and dancing, whereas Han-Chinese majorities are sophisticated, timid and restrained.
- On the other extreme world music and ethnic pop can be seen as enabling encounters and facilitating mutual understanding. They promote the ideal of a pluralized society where people

of different ethnic backgrounds are welcome, equal and happy (or hippy). World music and ethnic pop also have proven to be one of the few effective strategies for musicians with disadvantaged ethnic backgrounds to make their voices heard in the mainstream media, and to find a market.

Like traveling and tourism, the sonic tourism of world music and ethnic pop negotiates this dilemma. They introduce mainstream Chinese and/or Western audiences to a different worldview (or 'worldsound') without going so far as to challenge the privileged position of these audiences. Singers may also manipulate this dilemma to their advantage. The wild and sexy sounds and images of the Taiwanese singer A-mei were not deemed improper in the late 1990s, because she has an aboriginal (puyuma) background, on which she reflects in a number of songs.

Mainstream successes

The German project Enigma scored a hit with the song "Return to Innocence" in 1994. The song contains an unauthorized sample of the aboriginal Taiwanese singers Kuo Ying-nan and Kuo Hsiu-chu. In 1998 these singers of the Ami ethnicity sued Enigma, after which the matter was settled out of court.

Shortly after this, China joined the band wagon of world beat and new age. In 1988 Wind Records started as a distributor of new age and Buddhist music in Taiwan. After successes with albums of the American Matthew Lien in 1995, the company started to produce its own albums.

More or less simultaneously on the mainland, the composer He Xuntian of the Shanghai conservatory used extensive field recordings and the latest MIDI technology to produce the album *Sister Drum* (1995). The album was sung by the Cantonese singer Zhu Zheqin (aka Dadawa), whose wide vocal range and abundant inflections and vibratos are as reminiscent of Enya and even Faye Wong as they are of Tibetan folksong. Still the album was marketed both inside and outside China in reference to those mysterious and spiritual highlands.

Sa Dingding won the Asia/Pacific World Music Award from BBC Radio 3 in 2008 with her debut *Alive* (2007). Like Zhu Zheqin, Sa Dingding is a Han-Chinese singer posing as a sensual exotic beauty. *Alive* evokes a esoteric and spiritual Tibet and the subsequent album *Harmony* (2010) samples ethnic sounds of Yunnan province.

Hanggai

- Whereas Zhu Zheqin and Sa Dingding market femininities, the folk rock band Hanggai displays a machismo that is reminiscent of Rammstein. This is in style with their (inner) Mongolian roots. The band's songs celebrate a nomadic existence, the prairies, meat-eating, horse-riding and drinking. During the many international festival tours members often wear semi-traditional leather outfits.
- The music also doesn't rely on samples and midi but is a live sound that fuses rock with Mongolian and Chinese acoustic instruments (such as the horse-head fiddle) and vocal techniques (such as overtone singing). Band leader Ilchi (a Han-Chinese from Inner Mongolia) started Hanggai after a renewed interest in folk music swept the Beijing rock scene in the early 2000s. They were also influenced by the band IZ (aka *jiaoyin*, led by Mamu'r), which performed its new arrangements of Kazakh and Xinjiang folk music in Beijing.
- With the help of the Britons Robin Haller and Matteo Scumaci Hanggai recorded their first album in 2008 and performed in England, where the Dutch music company Earth Beat saw them. Earth Beat was able to plug Hanggai at world music, rock and metal festivals all over the world.

- No Chinese rock band or pop singer performs as much internationally as Hanggai. Since 2010 they have invested in their success in China. Although they are well known in the band scene, it has proven difficult for them to get exposure in the mainstream media, where their Mongolian background is not an asset. Still they have organized a successful festival in Beijing in 2012, explicitly framing their efforts as world music rather than Mongolian music, Chinese music or (folk) rock.

The above-mentioned singers and bands make world music, and some of them use this label themselves. By contrast, ethnic pop is my term and as a genre it is almost indistinguishable from mainstream pop.

- Only music that represents an exotic sound in a national mainstream is ethnic pop. In this view, *Taike* rock (in Taiwan) and Tibetan pop (for Tibetans) are not by definition ethnic pop. Songs in these styles can be if they engage in self-exoticism.
- Ethnic minority singers don't always make their heritage explicit, which is the case with Cui Jian (Beijing born Korean) and Zhang Zhenyue (Taipei born A-mei).
- Most of the successful ethnic pop songs are by singers that predominantly sing mainstream pop. This includes Zheng Jun's "Return to Lhasa" (1994) and a number of A-mei's songs (mentioned above).
- A number of the PRC's most successful propaganda singers have an ethnic background, including Tengge'er (Mongolian), Han Hong (Tibetan) and Song Zuying (Hmong). Their ethnicity is subordinate to the celebration of the nation (see Mass and Propaganda Music).
- Finally, singers such as Dao Lang (in 2002) and the duo Phoenix Legend (after 2005) have been hugely successful with a sound inspired by ethnic music, relating to Xinjiang and Inner-Mongolia respectively. Because the success of these musicians is in China's second and third tier cities and their sound is relatively conservative, they are not always given due credit.

4.9 Mass and Propaganda Music

Modern music entered China as choral music, in the Taiping rebellion, and more generally in churches, schools and armies. Shanghai pops created the first individual voices and stars, but as the Second World War unfolded, music was again increasingly focused on mobilizing masses.

- Nie Er's 1935 composition "March of the Volunteers" was one of his many songs that appeared in Leftist cinema, were sung by a chorus and supported by bombastic instrumentation. It would later become the national anthem of the PRC.

When the Chinese Communist Party came to power in 1949

- It banned Shanghai pop, which it deemed colonial and decadent.
- It instead patronized mass music based on Western art music, especially Russian romantic composers, such as Xian Xinghai's "The Yellow River Cantata", composed in 1939.
- After 1958 a singing style based on Chinese folk emerged that vied *bel canto* as the musical language at official events. The so called 'battle of the native and the foreign' marks this emergence, after which conservatories established programs in Chinese folk singing. Although this singing style was based on various Chinese traditions and was relatively nasal, it absorbed elements of *bel canto* and Western art music in its competition for official recognition. This makes it distinctly different from rural folk singing traditions. Therefore, I will call this music official folk.

"The East is Red" and other songs adapted from folk songs during the 1930s and 1940s continued to be

popular during the 1950s and 1960s and more ‘songs from the battlefield’ appeared, often composed collectively (see Urban Folk above).

A number of these folk songs re-appeared in the eight Model Operas (*yangbanxi*) that dominated the mass media in the 1960s and 1970s.

1. The Legend of the Red Lantern
2. Shajiabang (a symphony)
3. Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy
4. Raid on the White Tiger Regiment
5. Ode of the Dragon River
6. On the Dock
7. Red Detachment of Women (a ballet)
8. The White-Haired Girl (a ballet)

Mao Zedong’s wife Jiang Qing overlooked the production and made sure that its social realist style was perfect: villains sounded gloomy, looked unhealthy and were shot in dark conditions, whereas heroes sounded invariably optimistic, and were shot from low angles in the brightest colors.

After the open-door policy started in 1978, official folk singing reemerged and TV became its major stage.

- China Central Television (CCTV) has broadcast the Chinese New Year Gala every year since 1983 (see Talent Shows and Other Music-Related Television Programs).
- The CCTV also broadcasts the Young Singers Television Contest, every other year since 1984. (Official) folk singing is one of the three, later four, major categories of this competition (see Talent Shows and Other Music-Related Television Programs).

Main Melody

- ‘Main melody’ is a term in the PRC for the CCP party line. Later propaganda terms such as ‘harmonious society’ also have musical connotations. The scholar Nimrod Baranovitch has argued that propaganda singers lose their individuality and become interchangeable in the play of national symbols, choruses and bombastic orchestration.
- Nevertheless, a number of ‘main melody’ singers have been able to become celebrities, most notable Peng Liyuan and Song Zuying. Peng was successful in the 1980s, but retired after she married Xi Jinping. Song became third in the CCTV Young Singers Television Contest, but has performed almost yearly at the CCTV Chinese New Year Gala since 1992.

Ethnicity

With the rise of pop music in the 1980s and 1990s, the state has not only made use of singers of the official folk singing style but also of pop singers. The army has trained and employed pop singers such as Teng Ge’er and Han Hong.

- The less static and more modern sound of these artists was able to capture large audiences.
- Almost all these singers are so called ‘ethnic minorities’. That Teng Ge’er is Mongolian makes his glorification of the Chinese nation extra powerful.

In recent years the PRC has tended to have less artists on the payroll and to outsource musical production to mainstream pop stars (see Commission and State Music).

4.10 Western Art Music

Western art music, colloquially referred to as classical music, was first imported to China by Jesuits in 1601. After mission work and school songs, the first conservatory was established in China in 1927.

Both the ROC (based in Taiwan) and the PRC (based in Beijing) favored Western Art Music, even though they didn't always favor the same composers. Especially during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) most Western composers were banned in the PRC as bourgeoisie and reactionary, but Western art music was nevertheless a strong influence on the eight Model Operas that dominated the era.

With the growing wealth of Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong and later the PRC, more and more ethnically Chinese people started appreciating and studying Western art music. With an estimate of 30 million piano students and 10 million violin students in 2007 in China, Asia was already supplying 30 to 40 percent of students at America's top music schools (New York Times).

Reasons

- Western art music represents modernity, rationality and an aura of scientific correctness. Already in the early 20th century Western art music was pitted against 'backward' and 'unscientific' local Chinese musics. Despite increasing patriotism in the 21st century, parents have not en mass encouraged their children to study Chinese musical instruments.
- Not only in China, but also in South-Korea and Japan, the tradition of Confucianism stresses that education builds moral character. More so than sports, music education is generally believed to help children develop their mental and ethical abilities.
- Western art music is prestigious and upper-class. Like becoming an Olympic athlete, becoming a successful soloist is seen by many Chinese parents as a desirable future for their child, and sometimes a ticket out of poverty for the whole family. In tune with this Olympic spirit, education and awards celebrate excellence and virtuosity rather than creativity and team-building. As a side remark, this is one of the reasons why China has difficulty producing a top-level symphony orchestra. It doesn't lack soloists, but its wind and brass sections are often substandard.
- Chinese governments sponsor Western art music directly and indirectly. In the context of the cultural and creative industries city governments all over the country have build costly theaters, often without properly considering both the programming or the market (see Cultural and Creative Industries Policy below). For instance the National Centre for the Performing Arts was build in December 2007 on a prime location next to Tiananmen Square in Beijing. It cost 3.2 billion RMB to build it and the operation cost alone are huge. The Dongbei University of Finance calculated that as much as 60% of the operation cost needs to be subsidized.

Successful artists

- Tan Dun is part of the first batch of composers that enter the conservatories after they were re-opened after the Cultural Revolution. In 1987 he moved to New York. He has composed a range of opera's, many of which include Asian and Chinese sounds and other references. He is most widely known for his composition of the film score of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* in 2000.
- Yo-yo Ma was born in France to Chinese parents. He became a celebrated cellist in the 1980s. Next to Western art music, Ma established a Silk Road Ensemble in 1998 to explore the musical heritage of Eurasia.
- Lang Lang's career as a virtuoso pianist took off in the early 2000s. After he had some of his largest successes in America, he started profiling himself in China as a patriotic celebrity. With for instance a piano solo at the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics in 2008 he became a

household name.

5. Policy

All East-Asian nations have long histories of censorship and government involvement in cultural production. Both Taiwan under martial law (1949-1987) and the PRC during the Revolutionary Period (1949-1978) continued ancient practices where popular culture is treated as a popularity poll, and one governments want to influence. Confucius said: 'the music of a peaceful and prosperous country is quiet and joyous, and the government is orderly. The music of a country in turmoil shows dissatisfaction and anger, and the government is chaotic.'

The most extreme equation of culture and politics occurred in the PRC during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1978), implementing Mao Zedong's directions first laid out in his Yan'an talks on literature and art in 1942.

When the open door policy picked up speed in the 1980s, market-forces were slowly reintroduced in the production of culture. The state ceased to be the sole legal producer of culture.

- In 1982, propaganda departments within the CCP and the military were reduced and the PRC Ministry of Culture again became the central agency on cultural policies.
- Although not privatised, song-and-dance troupes as well as other core institutions of the CCP and PRC's 'propaganda machine', such as publishers, newspapers, television stations and radio broadcasters have over the last thirty years been increasingly expected to become competitive and profitable.
- Since the 1980s, singers that are employed by the military as part of their propagandistic song-and-dance troupes find themselves competing with popular culture imported from liberal market economies such as Hong Kong and Taiwan. In response, state-sponsored singers such as Teng Ge'er, Han Hong and Song Zuying increasingly cultivate images of individualised pop stars, even though their allegiance to the state and the party is never in question.
- Slowly but irreversibly, the state has changed from a monopolistic producer to the more distant role of commissioner in and regulator of a cultural market.

5.1 Censorship

Censorship exists in every society. Perhaps more so than in other places, Chinese societies expect their governments (and other authoritative institutions such as universities) to guard moral standards, and see censorship as an accepted tool to this end, for instance in restricting pornography and the glorification of drugs. The trend in recent years in the PRC is towards less repression in general and stricter repression of extreme cases.

Rock music

- Rock used to be stigmatized in the 1990s. Rock bands could not appear in the state media and the term 'rock' (*yaogun*) could not appear in publications or concerts. CDs had to get official approval, but in general bands and promoters found ways around restrictions:
 - by using terms such as 'new music' instead of 'rock';
 - by submitting albums at local or more liberal government agencies;
 - by not printing sensitive words in the booklet;
 - by publishing as a book or without an official publishing number;
 - in some cases, such as with Tongue and Zuoxiao Zuzhou's Modern Sky albums, the

vocal track was mixed down, so that the words became inaudible.

Additional relations with authorities:

- the police would regularly search concerts goers for drugs, but the fact that concerts lacked the required official permits rarely resulted in them being shut down.
- An extreme example is Pan Gu (aka Punk God), who went into asylum in Sweden in 2005 after performing at a festival that promoted Taiwanese independence.
- In the course of the 2000s rock slowly became more accepted, and most bands have little problems with the authorities.
 - Music festivals created an important middle ground where rock institutions and local governments worked out ways of collaborating. To some extent rock became state sponsored through official support of music festivals since 2007 (see Festivals above).
 - The local state-owned media are sometimes directly involved in these events and report heavily on them. More generally, television stations now sometimes show rock musicians and rock shows, such as before the live broadcasts of the European Football Championship on CCTV's sports channel in the summer of 2012.
 - The word 'rock' is still often avoided. Bands need to submit set lists and lyrics before performances at festivals, but these are in fact rarely censored. For instance Miserable Faith performs its signature song "Where ever there's oppression, there is resistance" on most festivals. Still, after Björk shouted 'Tibet, Tibet' after her song "Call for Independence" at a concert in Shanghai in 2008 all foreign concert for the rest of the year were canceled.
 - A number of artists have been forbidden to perform since 2010. Some of them because of their support of the artist Ai Weiwei (Zuoxiao Zuzhou, Happy Avenue), others because of their outright attack of the political system (Ordinance, albeit more than a year after their album release).
 - The police rarely arrives at a rock show. Venues cultivate good relations with local police stations, involving remunerations. If local residents complain, the police usually don't respond. If a venue opens without consulting the local police, it will get into trouble, for instance at Mao Livehouse's soft opening in Shanghai.
 - A number of musicians have been apprehended over the years for using drugs, mostly marijuana.
 - Both in the case of political censorship and drug arrests, officials make it clear that it is not in the favor of the artists to seek media attention.
- Although the general climate has improved, rock and other youth cultures still have a disadvantage. Indirect effects include:
 - Self-censorship. Bands sing in English, avoid politically sensitive issues or come to detest politics as a nuisance and rather opt for hedonism and/or parody.
 - The PRC's sometimes unpredictable censorship adds insecurity to an already insecure market and must be seen as one of the reasons why the mainland Chinese music industry is less successful than Taiwan's.

World Music

- Given eruptions of conflicts in Tibet and Xinjiang, expressions of ethnic identities are sensitive. This has indirectly inhibited the development of bands such as Hanggai.
- The use of dialects on radio and television is sensitive in the PRC. In Taiwan the use of language is completely politicized and since 2000 all languages and dialects are represented.

Pop music

- The State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television (SARFT) is much more liberal with music than with cinema. However, some of the restrictions of television also affect music, for instance those regarding talent shows, see Talent Shows and Other Music-Related Television Programs above.
- The few instances of censorship in mainstream music relate to songs that compare being in love to opium (Faye Wong in 2003, James Lin aka Yoga in 2012) or otherwise mention drugs in their lyrics.
- A-mei was briefly on a black list after sang she the national anthem of the Republic of China (i.e. Taiwan) in 2000 at the inauguration of president Cheng Shui-bian, who is a fervent supporter of Taiwanese independence. This black list is not publicly known.
- Indirect selection procedures work through commissions, see Commission and State Ceremonies below.

5.2 Commissions and State Ceremonies

Various Chinese governments are not only restricting art they dislike through censorship, but also promoting art they like through commissions. Most of these commissions and endorsements relate to large scale state ceremonies:

- Hong Kong handover in 1997.
- The opening and closing ceremonies of the Beijing Olympics in 2008.
- The 60th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China in 2009.
- The World Expo in Shanghai in 2010.

The program at such events consists of

- Military music and official propaganda singers (see Mass and Propaganda Music above).
- Hong Kong and Taiwanese super stars such as Andy Lau and Jay Chou.
- The Hong Kong based scholar Anthony Fung has noted that PRC pop singers such as Super Girl winner Chris Lee are left out. That is because these local singers don't have the international cachet, but also because these singers remind PRC officials of the fact that domestic audiences have their own tastes and desires.

Local governments in China

- Local Chinese governments traditionally organize cultural events, to promote policies, celebrate achievements or promote tourism.
- These events used to make exclusive use of official singers, television and other formats of the central media.
- The Same Song is a weekly music program of CCTV, since 2000. It travels to different locations and local government vie to get the program to their cities in order to get nation-wide exposure.
- Local government also organize their own events. The Nanning International Folk Song Festival is held yearly since 1999 in this south Chinese city. The festival is also known by the title of its theme song "Big Earth Flying Song" (*dadi feige*), for which the city government commissioned Song Zuying.
- In the course of the 1990s and 2000s, local governments have increasingly included pop music performances in the programs of these events. For mainland Chinese, Hong Kong and Taiwanese pop stars, singing three or four songs at various events throughout the year adds up to a around 25% of their income.
- Music Festivals became an additional possibility for local governments since 2007. Music

festivals bring younger audiences and are potentially profitable (see Festivals above).

- In Hong Kong the government supports the Hong Kong Arts Festival.
- In Taiwan the Ho Hai Yan is government sponsored and so is the new year party at the 101.

5.3 Cultural and Creative Industries Policy

The general framework for the government investment in art is provided by the cultural and creative industries discourse.

Theory

- The neo-Marxists Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer coined the term ‘the culture industry’ in 1944 to criticize the factory-like way popular music was produced.
- In the 1970s and 1980s culture played a role in the regeneration of post-industrial cities such as Manchester. Theories emerged that advised governments to invest in culture in order to improve their cities economically. Richard Florida’s ideas about the creative class are perhaps most widely known.

China

The term ‘cultural industries’ replaced ‘cultural institutions’ (*wenhua shiye*) as the central cultural policy term in PRC documents around 2000. This new discourse has been successful because:

- It resonates well with the central government’s long term plan of changing the emphasis of China’s economy from production (‘made in China’) towards services (‘created in China’). It also has connections with other important issues, such as urbanization and sustainability.
- It gives the trend of marketization a theoretical framework. It argues that culture is produced by a range of industries that are not much different from others that the government regulates and is nowadays rarely directly involved in. According to this discourse it is as absurd for the government to pay the entire budget of a television station as it would be for it to buy all steel from a state-owned plant.
- Nevertheless the cultural industries discourse empowers officials and tells them they have an important role in organizing and stimulating culture.

Ambiguities

- Depoliticization. The cultural industries discourse has framed for instance rock music and expressions of ‘ethnic minority’ culture in commercial frameworks and worked to co-opt them for festival culture and tourism. However, from Adorno to conservative forces in the CCP, Marxists believe and fear in the power of culture to mobilize people. Is producing culture really the same as producing steel?
- The Outline for the Tenth Five Year Plan (2000) first enshrined the term ‘cultural industries’ in a central policy document and exhibits the typical balancing act between capitalism’s profit maximisation and the communism’s social concerns. It argues: ‘The cultural industry units must push their production efficiency and economic impact to the maximum, constantly improve their operational management, provide the market with cultural and artistic products and services that satisfy demands, promote healthy values and that are diverse, and [thus] receive the largest social impact and the best economic returns.’
- Cultural or creative industries. After 2005 the discourse of the creative industries entered China. Rather than replacing ‘cultural industries’, both terms are used interchangeably. This confusion is deliberate, because the creative industries discourse is tied to Western notions of creativity, novelty, individuality (or small companies) and freedom (to experiment and of expression). By

contrast the cultural industries discourse suits China's stress on tradition and stability (or 'harmony'), and its support of museums, education and (historical) tourism. Still the creative industries discourse is needed to explain how China is going to stimulate technological and business innovativeness, and to produce a Bill Gate (Microsoft) or Steve Jobs (Apple).

- Local variations. There is no consensus on what industries are included under the cultural and/or creative industries. The city government of Beijing has formulated a 'cultural and creative industries' policy that includes software development and Internet services. Shanghai promotes the 'creative industries', which includes architecture and something labelled 'fashionable consumption creativity'. Hangzhou's cultural industries policy mentions education and Nanjing's industrial design. Although Chinese books on the cultural industry habitually list administrative chaos as a potential thread, this decentralised approach is a normal phase in Chinese policy developments, after which certain areas may be singled out as best-practice.

Results for the music industry

- Whereas in the West creative industries discourse provides arguments for reducing government spending on culture, in China it has resulted in an increase of government spending. That said, it's difficult to say how much the government is spending. 'Between 1990 and 1998, the cultural production of the national cultural system increase from 1,21 to 8,37 billion, or sixfold,' puts the Outline for the Tenth Five Year Plan forward in 2000. In 2009 the cultural industries grew to 840 billion or 2.5% of GDP, whereas it provided 12,3% of the GDP of Beijing. Additionally, The Twelfth Five Year Plan (2010) stipulates that the added value of the cultural industries will grow to 316,6 billion or 1.10% of the GDP of the service sector in 2015. These numbers suggest that the government wants the Chinese cultural industries to grow at an even faster pace than the Chinese economy in general, and is willing to put its money where its mouth is.
- Most of this money is spend on showy, large-scale projects. Since 2005 local governments across the nation have organized festivals and built opera houses and theaters. Often local audiences and music scenes are not consulted or even considered in these processes. The idea is: built it and they will come.
- City and district governments have identified industry parks where clusters of cultural and creative industries are offered tax breaks, lower rents and other benefits. For instance Beijing identified seven areas in and around the city for the music industry, focusing for instance on instrument making. Although record companies may profit from these constructions, most musicians are skeptical of these developments, arguing that only employees of state-owned music institutions are eligible for support.

5.4 Soft Power and Internationalization

The cultural and creative industries discourse also links up with China's drive to also become a cultural superpower. 'Moving out (into the world)' (*zou chuqu*) became a buzzword in policy circles after 2010. Nevertheless, so far it has been difficult to export Chinese musical culture (see International Collaborations below).

- Song Zuying has performed in Sydney, Washington and Vienna, most likely subsidized.
- Several China festivals in the West have worked together with the PRC's Department of Culture, for instance Europalia in Brussels. The Department of Culture tends to favor Western art music orchestras and established Peking Opera groups.
- Tan Dun, Dao Lang and others are prominent in Western art music world-wide.

- The Taiwanese government has a program for promoting music produced in Taiwan in other countries. Bands can apply for support in the travel expenses to a handful of European and North-American festivals.
- The American festival South By South West since 2009 features a Japanese night sponsored by the Japanese government and a Chinese night sponsored by the record label Maybe Mars.
- In 2012, the Department of Culture financed the travel expenses of three Beijing metal bands to the German festival Wacken. The bands were selected by the Midi School of Music.
- Confucius institutes have their own budgets and have organized smaller performances of Chinese bands and artists on their European or North-American tours.

5.5 Copyrights

The Hong Kong city government defines the creative industries as those industries that rely on intellectual property rights (IPR). The lack of IPR protection seems to be one of the reasons for the weak music industry of the PRC.

- More than 90% of the music is pirated. CD shops and roadside stall would sell pirated copies of films and music in the late 1990s and early 2000s. However by the end of the first decade of the 21st century downloading and streaming on the internet became so easy that even these CD shops closed down. In 2012 there are only a handful of CD shops in Beijing.
- There is distrust in the whole production chain. Beijing bands sell their albums for a lump sum to a record label because they distrust the sales volumes the record company provides. Record companies don't know how many items the pressing factory makes.
- Foreign record companies that entered the market in the early 1990s retreated a few years later. Few local record companies have been able to exist for over five years. In 2012, record deals are rare and many bands publish their own album, if at all.
- Meanwhile downloading sites such as Baidu, Xiami and VeryCD are hardly restricted. Other profitable music businesses, such as karaoke and ring tones, in the best of cases pay no more than 5% to copyright holders.
- However, copyright holders have sued commercial companies over copyright infringements. Most of these cases have been settled out of court for undisclosed amounts. In short, for companies it seems possible to protect copyrights to a certain degree.

Especially since the PRC joined the WTO in 2001, its copyright laws are up to international standards. The problem lies with institutionalization

- In Hong Kong the Composers and Authors Society (CASH) was established in 1977.
- In the PRC the discussion around copyrights got a new impulse in March 2012 when a new revision of the the copyright law was proposed by the National Copyright Administration of China (NCAC) ([briefly discussed here](#)). Especially record companies and celebrity singers, producers and investors reacted furiously and emotionally
 - against the fact they were not involved in the process at all;
 - against the proposed idea that after three months anyone could record a new version of a song without permission of the author;
 - against the proposed idea that an official institution would represent copyright holders, even if these didn't want to be represented by the institution (so called *bei daibiao*). The fear is that an advertisement company could go to this institution and secure the rights over a song for a fraction of the price that a record company or an artist would demand and that

because the workings of this government agency are not transparent copyright holders would have no idea what percentage of that money they would eventually receive.

Counter arguments involve

- breaking the monopoly of companies that withhold music from the people and limit the careers of singers (for instance if a record company owns the copyrights of a signature song of the singer);
- similar institutions exist in most other music markets, where they help secure copyright fees from fractured usages of popular music, for instance in stores, on the radio and in karaoke parlors.

The proposed amendment is under reconsideration and will not be accepted in its current form.

Copyrights or right to copy

- Chinese audiences have grown up with the idea that music is and should be free. The proposed amendment of the copyright law discussed above confirms the idea that music is seen as something more like tap water than like a painting. It suggests that citizens are entitled to music and companies cannot withhold the flow of music if they have access to it.
- Foreign commentators have pointed out that piracy has enabled Chinese audiences to see and hear otherwise censored information. Although saw-gash CDs and pirated music have opened worlds of possibilities for Chinese musicians, there are also indications that illegal downloading sites are subject to censorship too. Additionally, it seems fair that they would share some of their sizable profits with copyright holders.
- Also the copyright regime in the West primarily favors record companies, which own the copyrights. The idea is that a substantial part of this revenue trickles down to the artists. But some artists question this construction and feel that copyrights have restricted their artistic freedom. In this view, a tighter copyright regime might not fuel China's musical creativity but on the contrary stifle it. Global initiatives such as creative commons address this.
- This discussion goes back to the cultural and creative industries discourse, namely: should music be an industry?

6. International Collaborations

It's a cliché that music transcends national borders and even that it is a universal language. The ease with which pop music in English disseminates seems to prove this point. But music in Dutch, Swahili, Chinese and many other languages travel less easily. In short, although I agree that music appeals to universal human traits and influences (such as heart rate), I want to stress the connection between music and culture, and especially language.

- The dominance of English language pop is historically specific.
- Dutch, Tanzanian, Chinese and most other musicians with success in the West either make instrumental music (such as jazz or dance), sing in English (pop and rock) or their lyrics lose semantic meaning (world music).

China has so far not exported its music outside of its linguistic base in any significant numbers.

- By comparison, visual art, film and even something as bound by language as literature have done better with international audiences.
- By comparison, Japan and South-Korea have been more successful. Both these nations have spent decades building a popular music industry. Although Hong Kong and Taiwan have continued to develop Chinese popular music since its advent in the 1920s, its largest market, the mainland, has yet to implement a copyright regime or develop an alternative business model.

- As with sports (the Olympics), also in music the Chinese long for international recognition. Official support for internationalization could perhaps help (see Soft Power and Internationalization above).

6.1 Greater China

Chinese popular music has a transregional history, with the center of production shifting from Shanghai in the 1920s and 1930s to Hong Kong in the 1950s to 1990s and Taipei in the 1970s to 2000s (see Locations above). Although there were important flows of peoples, objects, sounds and capital between these locations, each has its own history too.

Early Shanghai pop was influenced by the West and its colonizers. Other locations within Greater China had yet to start developing their music industries and served mainly as markets. Li Jinhui traveled South-East Asia, including Singapore, with his Bright Moon troupe.

After 1949 Hong Kong and later Taiwan started producing more popular music. Between 1950s and 1980s the markets were distinct and collaborations rare.

- A few singers signed record deals in both Hong Kong and Taiwan. Singers would publish different albums in both locations, although a number of the songs might overlap.
- Since 1975, the Taiwanese singer Teresa Teng recorded thirty-six albums in Hong Kong for Polygram, including best-of, live albums, two albums in Japanese and two albums in Cantonese in 1980 and 1983 respectively. She also toured South-East Asia, including Vietnam and Indonesia.

Because Hong Kong was the center of Chinese popular music Li Ming, Faye Wong and many other mainland Chinese hopefuls moved to the British crown colony in the 1980s and 1990s. In the 1980s, Hong Kong and Taiwanese singers started appearing on TV in the mainland and later they started their first tours.

When large transnational record companies entered the Taiwanese market in the 1990s, local companies responded in kind.

- For instance Rock Records started operations in Hong Kong, Malaysia and Beijing. It introduced Taiwanese stars in the Hong Kong market, and also initiated and published bestseller Mandarin-language albums of Hong Kong stars such as Faye Wong and Jacky Cheung.
- Because most Taiwanese companies have their roots in campus songs they stress original songwriting and the vocal delivery of their singers. Hong Kong pop singers were relatively aware of their visual appearance, apt at dancing and generally better groomed for celebrity status. For instance the Hong Kong dancer Aaron Kwok first had his breakthrough in Taiwan with mandarin pop albums published by the Taiwanese record company UFO before he became one of the Four Heavenly Kings of Cantopop in 1991.
- As celebrity culture, video clips and KTV gained ground in the course of the 1990s, Taiwan came to resemble Hong Kong more and more.
- Despite a number of successes with Beijing stars in the Taiwanese market, Taiwanese, and Hong Kong record companies retracted from mainland China in the mid-1990s.

In the new millennium, Hong Kong and Taiwanese companies frequently work with each other, and sometimes with mainland Chinese singers, songwriters or producers.

Although some of the dialects in Taiwan and mainland China are similar, such as Hakka and Taiwanese/Fujianese/Hokkien, still the regional differences are huge. There is no data that indicates there is any musical exchange between these areas.

- Lin Sheng-xiang's folk music is in Hakka. He has performed in Beijing, sharing his experiences of musical activism. But he did not tour Hakka-speaking areas in mainland China.

6.2 East-Asia

The influence of Japanese music on Chinese popular music is huge, especially in the 1980s and 1990s.

1930s Shanghai.

- Li Xianglan, one of the pop stars of the time, was in fact Japanese. After 1945 she continued her career in Japan and later America as Shirley Yamaguchi.

Hong Kong.

- Many of the hits of Leslie Cheung, Anita Mui and the Four Heavenly Kings of Cantopop are cover version of Japanese pop songs with new lyrics and arrangements. Sometimes they even use Japanese words such as 'sayonara'.
- This also helped these singers to gain recognition in the Japanese market, especially Leslie Cheung.
- Faye Wong entered the Japanese market with the English song 'Eyes on Me' in 1999. Despite an award for best English song and two sold out shows in Tokyo in March of that year she did not continue this effort.

Taiwan

- Taiwan was part of Japan for fifty years. Even today many Taiwanese language pop songs are reminiscent of enka.
- Mainstream pop is also openly inspired by Japanese and more recently South-Korean examples, for instance in the big band sound of Jay Chou's arrangements, the visual presentation of boy bands and cuteness (*kawaii* in Japanese or *ke'ai* in Mandarin Chinese).
- Teresa Teng is the Greater-Chinese singer with most success in Japan. She recorded 23 Japanese albums. Many of her Chinese hits are mandarin versions of these songs by Japanese composers.
- The concept of live houses was introduced to Taiwan in the 1990s. Today Japanese bands regularly perform in live houses and on festivals in Taiwan.

Mainland

- Given the strained relation of Japan and the PRC, Japanese bands do not tour China very often. When the Japanese band Brahman performed at the Midi Festival in 2002, the audience sang anti-Japanese songs and threw beer bottles on stage. Since then festivals seem to be reluctant towards booking Japanese bands, afraid of causing incidents.
- That said, the best website on Chinese rock (www.yaogun.com) is in Japanese and Mao Livehouse is owned by Japanese investors.

Hallyu

- After the success of the soap series *Winter Sonata* in 2002, South-Korean popular culture became popular throughout East and South-East Asia. This Korean wave is often referred to as hallyu (or *hanliu* in Mandarin Chinese).

- Although *Winter Sonata* and most South-Korean soap series are melodramatic, South-Korean pop music is known for its upbeat tempos and energetic dance routines.
- South-Korean companies such as SM Entertainment, YG Entertainment and JYP Entertainment are especially good in creating individual identities for different band members. These identities are reflected in meticulously designed outfits that make the individual members recognizable, even if the group consists of 48 members, as with AKB48.
- With Big Bang, Kara, Girls' Generation and many others Hallyu dominates the boy and girl band segment of the Chinese market. Two of the four members of the Korean girl band Miss A are Chinese. It is a common strategy for South-Korean companies to sign one or two members from a market in which they hope a particular group to succeed.
- Korean pop singers such as Rain and the Wonder Girls also publish albums for the Chinese market with one or two Chinese language tracks and have occasionally worked together with Chinese pop singers. The 2005 album of the Taiwanese singer Wang Leehom contains the song "Perfect Interaction" featuring Rain and the South-Korean singer Lim Jeong Hee.

6.3 Worldwide

Beginnings

- The Beatles performed in Hong Kong in 1964.
- In April 1985 Wham! performed at the Workers' Stadium in Beijing in front of 10,000 people. The tour was organized by the band's manager Simon Napier Bell and documented by Lindsay Anderson in his film *Foreign Skies*. This historical event took Napier-Bell 18 months of negotiations to organize, a process documented in his 2005 book *I'm Coming To Take You To Lunch*. Napier-Bell flew to [China](#) and sat in hotel rooms calling whatever government phone numbers he could get his hands on. He persevered. "It was two years of lunches. I fed the whole government, 143 people three times each."
- Michael Jackson performed in Taipei in 1993.
- In 1995 Roxette performed in Beijing.

Festivals and Live Houses

- When music festivals proliferated after 2007, they started booking one or two foreign headliners (see Festivals above).
 - In 2005 Ian Brown and Common played at the Beijing Pop Festival, in 2006 Placebo and Supergrass and in 2007 Nine Inch Nails, Marky Ramone, New York Dolls, Public Enemy.
 - Karen O of the arty New York rock band the Yeah Yeah Yeahs performed at the Modern Sky Festival in November 2007.
 - In 2011 the Black Rabbit Festival brought 30 Second to Mars and Ludacris to Beijing and Shanghai.
- Festivals also offer opportunities for self-sponsored or embassy-sponsored aspiring bands to perform in China. A host of Western underground bands have toured China with like-minded Chinese bands, to tour the USA or Europe together later.
- A number of foreign governments have sponsored festivals and (music) events that promote their nation in China.
 - Notch (No+Ch), for Northern European bands, in Beijing and Shanghai between 2006 and 2011.
 - German Esplanada, in various cities between 2007 and 2010.

- To emergence of live houses with a capacity of one thousand (such Yu Gong Yi Shan in Beijing or the Wall in Taipei) enables the performance of foreign singers and bands that are not sure about their Chinese fame.
 - Sonic Youth performed in Beijing (StarLive) and Shanghai (the state-owned Music Hall) in April 2007.
 - The French duo Air performed in Beijing (Yu Gong Yi Shan) in 2008.

Concerted Efforts and Stadium Concerts

- Suede first performed in Beijing in 2003. In 2010 front man Bret Anderson gave a solo performances at the Strawberry Music Festival. In 2011 the whole band returned, playing stadiums in Beijing and Shanghai.
- The Rollin Stones performed in Hong Kong in 2003, but shows in Beijing and Shanghai were canceled at last moment because of SARS. In 2006 they finally performed in Shanghai. Five songs were censored.
- Also in 2003, Warner China started promoting Linkin Park. In 2006 they started a ‘bring Linkin Park to China’ campaign, convincing fans to buy legal albums. In 2007 the band played in Taipei (Broker Brother Heralds), and in Shanghai to a sold-out stadium crowd of 25,000. Michael Arfin, Linkin Park’s booking agent, said the concert grossed USD\$750,000. In 2009 they again performed in Shanghai. Then in 2011 failed to get a permit, most likely because of a meet and greet with the Dalai Llama. Linkin Park performed in Taipei (Broker Brother Heralds) instead.
- In 2005 Avril Lavigne performed in Taipei (Broker Brother Heralds) and Hong Kong. In 2008 she toured Taipei, Macau, Guangzhou, Chongqing, Lijiang (Snow Mountain Festival), Shanghai and Beijing. In April 2011 she headlined the China Music Valley Festival held outside Beijing and launched her next world tour with a show in Shanghai two days later. This so called Black Star tour also included shows in Taipei (Broker Brother Heralds) and Hong Kong and ended in 2012 with solo concerts in Beijing and Guangzhou.
- In 2007 Beyoncé performed in Shanghai and Taipei and in 2009 in Beijing.
- The Icelandic singer Björk performed in Hong Kong in late April 2008. During her Shanghai concert a few days later she shouted ‘Tibet’ at the end of her final song “Declare Independence”. The rest of the Olympic year no foreign artists are permitted to perform.
- In 2010 the Taiwanese agency Brokers Brothers Heralds failed to get permits for Bob Dylan’s performances in mainland China. But in 2011 Gehua-LiveNation succeeded and Dylan performed that year in Taipei, Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong. Rumors of censorship were denied by Dylan himself.
- In 2007 Eric Clapton performed in Hong Kong and Shanghai, in 2009 in Taipei and in 2011 in Hong Kong.
- The Eagles performed in Shanghai and Beijing in 2010, organized by Gehua-LiveNation.
- Radiohead performed in Taipei in 2012.

Chinese artists in the West

- As argued above, few Asian artists have a fan base outside of their linguistic areas, and even fewer Chinese.
- Teresa Teng is the major exception. That said, she was successful in East and Southeast Asia rather than the West (see Taipei, Greater China and East Asia above).
- Hong Kong and Taiwanese pop singers regularly perform for Chinese audiences in the West, for

instance in Las Vegas.

- Tan Dun, Lang Lang and other musicians have carved a niche for themselves in the West Art Music (see Western Art Music above).
- A number of punk bands such as Brain Failure and Subs have done small international tours.
- A number of Chinese artists that make world music have had international success, most notably the Beijing-based Hanggai (see World Music above).
- Individuals travel more easily than bands. Djs and experimental electronic musicians have relatively many opportunities to perform internationally (see Disco, House and Techno and Experimental Music and Sound Art above)

6.4 The Netherlands and China

The website [Buitengaats](#) provides the most complete and updated overview of the activities of Dutch musicians abroad, including China. Below a few of the more recent highlights.

Jazz and experimental music

- The Beijing International Jazz Festival has attracted practically all big jazz names from the [Netherlands](#) and other parts of the world.
- Han Bennink, Michiel Borstlap, Yuri Honing, Guus Janssen are just a few of the names who came to [China](#) to perform and educate Chinese audiences.
- In addition, the Willem Breuker Kollektief, jazz vocalist Laura Fygi (who regularly tours East Asia), and jazz trumpet player Saskia Laroo have been performing regularly in [China](#).
- In November 2008, the Calafax Reed Quartet toured [China](#) as part of the Far East Revisited Tour with the Tony Overwater Trio.
- In late 2009, the Jazz Orchestra of the Concertgebouw (JOC) performed in Beijing as part of the Beijing May Festival.
- The composer and experimental musician [Martijn Tellinga](#) has toured China in 2009 and 2011.

Western art music

- The piano player Ivo Janssen visited Beijing in September 2011, as part of the International Beijing Book Fair.
- The Royal Concert Hall Orchestra (KCO) toured Hong Kong, Shanghai and Beijing in February 2012, together with the violinist and violist Janine Jansen.

Pop music

- In April 2011 Laura Jansen performed at the Strawberry Festival in Beijing and Shanghai. In November she came back for solo concerts in Beijing, Wuhan, Shanghai and Nanjing.
- Sonja van Hamel and Band and Ken Stringfellow solo toured Beijing and Shanghai in September 2011.
- Frank Boeijen performed in Beijing and Shanghai in November 2011.
- The hardcore band No Turning Back visited Beijing and Shanghai in December 2011.
- DJ Tiësto toured China in 2006 (6 cities), 2008 (5 cities) and 2012 (Hong Kong).

Chinese musicians in the Netherlands

The International Rotterdam Film Festival invites a number of Chinese directors every year since the 1990s. Poetry International has invited a Chinese poet every other year or so (including Yan Jun) and Julidans (through Borneoco) has booked one or more Chinese dance performances for a number of years. By comparison, only a handful of Chinese musicians visited the Netherlands. They are absent from the many large and small music festivals that are held yearly in the Netherlands and perform

either at one-off China festivals or to overseas Chinese audiences.

Pop and rock

- The Hong Kong artist Leslie Cheung performed in Amsterdam and Rotterdam in December 1987 (if you have any information about this concert, please contact me).
- In late 2000 the Beijing rock star Cui Jian was awarded the Prins Claus Award. The jury rapport reads: 'His selection as a laureate was based on his ability to combine musicianship with fame so as to draw attention to the social issues that are important to him. In doing so, Cui Jian has never avoided conflict; he sides with the underdogs and has worked to effect positive change in his native country.' Cui performed in the Melkweg in Amsterdam on 28 January 2001.
- From 13 to 15 October 2005 ten mainland Chinese acts performed in Melkweg and Paradiso (Amsterdam) under the rubric ChinaPop. The acts included Wang Lei and Pump (Friday), Cold Fairyland, Second Hand Rose, Zuoxiao Zuzhou, FM3, Yan Jun, Wu Quan, DJ Yang Bing (Saturday), Monokino, Muma and Subs (Sunday). ChinaPop was part of the larger Amsterdam China Festival, which also brought visual art, writers, Peking opera, etc.
- The cultural festival Europalia.China was held in Brussels between September 2009 and February 2010 and like the Amsterdam China Festival offered a wide range of cultural events. However, because Europalia is itself a governmental organization and because it collaborated with the Chinese ministry of culture, it tended to favor the high arts and Western art music. Nevertheless the Vooruit in Gent organized a modern music program with Xiao He, Yan Jun, Wu Na and Zhang Jian (of FM3). These experimental musicians subsequently also performed in Amsterdam (Steim) and Rotterdam (Worm).
- 8 May 2010, Eason Chen played in Ahoi, Rotterdam.

World Music

- The Taiwanese world music band A Moving Sound performed at the Dunya Festival in Rotterdam in 2010.
- The Tropentheater (Amsterdam) and Rasa (Utrecht) have occasionally hosted Chinese traditional and world music acts, sometimes in collaboration with the Leiden-based organization CHIME. CHIME was also heavily involved in the folk, traditional and art music programming of the Amsterdam China Festival and Europalia.China mentioned above.
- The Mashrap Ensemble performs ballads, folk and traditional music from Uyghur (East Turkestan), in west China, claims their website. East Turkestan is called Xinjiang province by the PRC. Kamil Abbas and his wife form the center of the Mashrap Ensemble. Both performed in Chinese state troupes in the 1980s.
- The Dutch music company Earth Beat invested in Sa Dingding, but a poorly attended show in December 2008 at the Sugar Factory (Amsterdam) proved that it was unsuccessful.
- Earth Beat has successfully plugged the Beijing-based Mongolian band Hanggai in the West. This has included many performances at large and small festivals in the Netherlands. In 2009, Hanggai's 'Drinking Song' became at the theme song of the Zwarte Cross, and Jovink recorded a cover version. Hanggai's success story is the exception that proves that Chinese bands can succeed internationally (see World Music above).